

Afghan rebel leader rules out role for ex-king in settlement

NICOSIA (Agencies) — The leader of the Pakistan-based Afghan Mujahideen guerrilla alliance has rejected a role in any settlement in Afghanistan for ex-king Zahir Shah.

"Zahir Shah belongs to history and he has no role in Afghanistan and its political future," Burhanuddin Rabbani was quoted by the Iranian News Agency (IRNA) as saying at a news conference in Tehran Tuesday.

The Soviet Union recently contacted the ex-king in Italy where he lives in an effort to persuade him to take part in a settlement when Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan.

"The Mujahideen are on the verge of final victory and the formation of a government," IRNA quoted Rabbani as saying. Rabbani, who led the Mujahideen team in talks with the Soviet Union in Saudi Arabia, denied suggestions that there was a major rift between Pakistan and Iran-based groups.

Speaking in the presence of the spokesman for the Iran-based Mujahideen, Mohammed Karim Khalili, he said: "There isn't any kind of difference or conflict between us."

He said Iranian and Pakistan Mujahideen would meet in the Pakistani town of Peshawar Feb. 15 "to decide on the future government in Afghanistan."

The Mujahideen would cooperate with three categories of officials in Afghanistan, Rabbani was quoted as saying — those forced to accept jobs with the Soviet-backed government in Kabul, those cooperating with the Mujahideen, and those "with

no blood on their hands."

A Tehran daily newspaper reported that Yuli Vorontsov, Soviet deputy foreign minister and ambassador in Kabul charged by Moscow with finding an Afghan political settlement, would arrive in Tehran soon for talks with the Iran-based Mujahideen.

The Iran-based Mujahideen, operating in western Afghanistan and not as politically active so far as their Peshawar-based colleagues, said two weeks ago that they had received an offer of talks from the Soviet Union, IRNA reported.

"But Khalili repeated today (Tuesday) that a final decision on whether to accept or reject the offer has not been made," IRNA said.

Surprise Soviet move

In London, Soviet diplomats surprised Afghan demonstrators Tuesday by inviting them into the embassy in London and assuring them that Moscow intended to abide by its pledge to pull all its troops out of Afghanistan by Feb. 15.

Three Afghan representatives said they were asked in when the Afghanistan Association in Britain arrived at the embassy to present a petition on the ninth anniversary of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Afghans opposed to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan have

marked the anniversary each year with demonstrations. But this is the first time they have been allowed past the embassy main gate.

The delegation met embassy counsellor Vladimir Khanjenkov and Third Secretary Ivan Zolotov for 45 minutes.

U.S. stand

The United States does not object to Zahir Shah taking part in forming a new Kabul government, U.S. Under-Secretary of State Michael Armacost said Tuesday.

The United States would not place any obstacles in the way of Zahir Shah's return to Afghanistan if it was the Afghan people's wish, Armacost told an international television Worldnet news conference from Washington.

In Washington, the U.S. State Department said Tuesday Afghanistan's communist government has begun to unravel and is unlikely to survive if Soviet forces withdraw from the country as scheduled.

"The shift of military momentum toward the resistance... probably is irreversible," the department said in an annual report on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

In his last presidential statement noting the anniversary of the Soviet intervention of Afghanistan, President Ronald Reagan said Tuesday he fully expects the Soviets to withdraw their troops by the target date of Feb. 15.

"I fully expect them to honour their obligation to withdraw completely by Feb. 15," the president said.



A Syrian soldier mans check-point in west Beirut. The Syrian deterrent force deployed in west Beirut have frequently intervened to end factional fighting (Sygma photo).

Syrian troops halt renewed Beirut Amal-Hizbollah clash

BEIRUT (R) — Syrian troops took up positions in trouble spots in Beirut's southern suburbs after intervening to end fierce clashes between rival militias, security sources said Wednesday.

The fighting between militias of Amal and Hizbollah (Party of God) erupted Tuesday but ended that night after Syrian troops intervened, they added.

No casualties were reported in the exchanges involving machinegun fire and rocket-propelled grenades in the Ghohair and Bir Al Abed districts in the densely-populated southern suburbs.

Some of the 17 Western hostages in Lebanon are believed held in the impoverished suburbs

of Hizbollah. Shi'ite mufti Sheikh Adel Amir Kahalan, who wields strong influence on Amal, urged gunmen on both sides to avoid "falling again in a mad and futile war."

Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, the spiritual mentor of Hizbollah, appealed to Amal and Hizbollah to halt "the fighting which has claimed innocent lives, destroyed houses, displaced oppressed people."

At least 29 people were killed and 72 wounded in five days of fighting between Amal and Hizbollah in the southern suburbs last month and afterwards spilled over into west Beirut.

The two factions, vying for

dominance of Lebanon's 1.5 million Shi'ites, have frequently fought since 1984 when Hizbollah emerged as a challenge to Amal.

Amal ousted some 1,000 Hizbollah fighters from South Lebanon in April. In May two sides battled in the suburbs and some 500 people were killed.

Syria, which maintains some 25,000 troops in Lebanon, halted the May battles by deploying thousands of soldiers in the suburbs.

Hizbollah, financed and ideologically inspired by Iran, seeks a greater political role among Lebanon's Shi'ites while Amal wants to maintain its leading role.

3 commandos killed in battle with Israelis

SIDON (Agencies) — Three Palestinian commandos clashed in a six-hour shootout with Israeli troops in northern Israel early Wednesday, the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) said.

It reported in a communique that the gunbattle erupted at 4 a.m. (0200 GMT) near the northern Israeli town of Manara after the commandos crossed the border from South Lebanon.

"The fate of the attackers is unknown. More details will be released later," the communique said.

The PLF is a small faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The faction's leader, Taalat Yacoub, died of a heart attack in Algiers last month after a meeting of the Palestine National Council.

The PLF communique said Wednesday's attack was "dedicated as a memorial for Taalat Yacoub, a champion of armed struggle to liberate Palestine."

An Israeli spokesman said Israeli troops killed three Palestinian fighters trying to cross the border from Lebanon during the night.

It was the second time in three days soldiers clashed with commandos at the Lebanese village of Mus Al Jabel, close to the Israeli settlement of Kibbutz Manara. The army said Monday it killed another three commandos.

Before Wednesday's clash, an Israeli army spokesman said its troops and the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia had encountered commandos 632 times in Lebanon in 1988.

PLO: Dialogue is not enough

(Continued from page 1)

is that Shamir wants (the Camp David provisions) under the auspices of the two superpowers instead of one," he said. "Any continuation of this policy of blindness will only lead to a deadlock," he said.

Abed Rabbio, who attended a round of talks between the PLO and the U.S. in Tunis earlier this month — the first formal meeting between the two sides in 13 years — said another encounter was scheduled to be held in the second half of February to discuss "political issues." He said he believed that the new U.S. administration of George Bush, who takes office Jan. 20, will continue the same policy outlined by the outgoing Reagan administration. "I don't see any reason why it should not," Abed Rabbio said.

Answering a question whether the U.S. goal of opening a dialogue with the PLO was an end to the one-year-old Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, Abed Rabbio said the intifada was not an issue for discussions with the U.S.

However, he disclosed that a document prepared by Shultz and passed on to the PLO through the Swedish government in early December "laid out a moratorium (on the uprising) once negotiations begin at the international conference."

"But, we said that unless this clause was cancelled, we would not discuss anything. Subsequently, the clause was cancelled," Abed Rabbio said. "The intifada is a movement of an entire people, not a military or paramilitary operation."

Vowing that the uprising

will continue until the Palestinian people achieve their goal of an independent state, Abed Rabbio said: "Without the intifada, all that is presently being discussed will not mean anything. It is our basic line of policy."

According to Abed Rabbio, the immediate political programme of the PLO includes strengthened relations with Arab states, with particular focus on the countries in confrontation line with Israel. In this context, Abed Rabbio indicated that there was a possibility of rapprochement between the PLO and Syria. "We are hoping for a Palestinian-Syrian dialogue," he said without elaboration.

An Arab summit is expected to be held in the next two months. By then, the PLO is also expected to announce a provisional government representing the Palestinian people inside and outside the occupied territories, Abed Rabbio said. "Studies and consultations on the provisional government are ongoing and details will be discussed at the next meeting of the PLO Executive Committee," he said.

Asked why Mustafa Al Zibri, representative of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) did not attend this week's meeting of the PLO Executive Committee in Baghdad and why he voiced criticism of the PLO chairman's peace strategy, Abed Rabbio said there had always been differences within the PLO. "But we have proved that we can solve these problems," he said. "Moreover, due to the intifada, the differences have been reduced and we can call them 'ijtihadat' (interpretations)," he said.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Cleric rumoured missing arrives in Syria

DAMASCUS (AP) — Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Shamseddine, a leading Lebanese Shi'ite cleric, arrived in Damascus Tuesday after a month's visit to Iran that he called "extremely positive," Shamseddine, acting chairman of the Lebanese Higher Supreme Shi'ite Council, met with Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and other top officials to discuss the situation in Lebanon.

Israel frees 12 Lebanese

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel freed 12 Lebanese Tuesday after clearing them of involvement in a suicide car bomb attack that killed eight soldiers near the Israeli-Lebanese border in October. Sources said the army returned the nine men and three women to the southern Lebanese villages of Markabe and Kafr Kela in Israel's self-declared border "security zone."

Baz assails Israeli 'gimmicks'

(Continued from page 1)

seeing an isolated Israel, rather a positive Israel," Baz said.

He ruled out a visit by Mubarak to Israel soon. Speculation on such a visit erupted after the Egyptian president offered in two interviews to go to Israel if that would lead to the resolution of the Palestinian issue.

Baz said that while Egypt had no "objections... inhibitions" about holding contacts with Israel or any other party in the interest of peace, the government did not believe in "ceremonial meetings."

"At this point, it is not in the interest of parties to have a (summit) meeting just to argue a point here or there. This is being done through regular channels," Baz said.

"For a meeting between the president and the Israeli prime minister or any other high-ranking Israeli official to take place and become fruitful, we must

witness before holding the meeting the realisation of meaningful and tangible progress on the road to peace," he added.

"We believe it is Israel's turn to reciprocate and to take a similar (flexible) position that would allow the negotiations to start," Baz said referring to the PLO's moderate stance. "Israel is well-advised to accept entering negotiations, and co-exist with the Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip."

Speaking on other issues, Baz said that he expected Mubarak to visit the United States in the first half of 1989 to hold talks with Bush.

Asked about recent attempts to reconcile Egypt and Syria, Baz said that while there was no objection to improving relations with Damascus, Egypt refused any preconditions attached to resuming diplomatic ties.

Ex-Mossad chief details human smuggling

TEL AVIV (AP) — Isser Harel, the former chief of Israel's Mossad intelligence service, was quoted as saying Tuesday that Mossad agents have cooperated with the Spanish Franco regime to smuggle some 76,000 Jews out of Arab states in North Africa.

In a Ben Gurion University lecture Tuesday, Harel said Israel began an operation aimed at underground Jewish emigration from North Africa's Arab states as early as in 1955, by sending a special agent, Israel radio reported.

The agent returned with a report that Jewish youths in the Arab countries of North Africa were ready to organise "self-defence" units.

Israel then sent 20 Arabic speakers and former army officers and soldiers to North Africa. Their task was to mobilise Jews who were then trained at Israeli army bases and in France, Harel was quoted as saying.

Illegal Jewish emigration began in 1960 and continued till 1963, Harel was quoted as saying. During that period, Israel smuggled out some 101,000 Jews from North Africa, mostly from Morocco.

About 25,000 Harel was quoted as saying, emigrated with the help of false documents. But at a later stage, it became clear the method could not fit the rest of North Africa's Jewry.

Some 76,000 Jews were thus taken out with the help of the fascist Franco regime in Spain, the radio quoted Harel as saying.

"To our surprise, senior officials of the Franco regime in Spain agreed to cooperate with us," the local Itim news agency quoted Harel as saying. Israel paid about \$500,000 for that cooperation.

The former Mossad chief was quoted as saying that these Jews were smuggled to the Spanish-controlled zones in North Africa. From there, they were taken via the sea to Gibraltar, Spain, the French port of Marseilles and, finally, Israel.

The former Mossad chief was

also quoted as saying that when the operation started, Israel's leadership headed by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion gave an order to deny immigration to the elderly, disabled or chronically sick people.

However the order was cancelled after Harel asked Ben-Gurion what would happen to a Jewish widow and her 10 children whom Mossad agents found in a remote corner of Morocco.

In response, Ben-Gurion ordered to bring all the Jews of North Africa to Israel. Itim quoted Harel as saying.

Harel was responsible for illegal emigration in his capacity as Mossad chief from 1952 to 1963.

Iran under pressure to do more to cement ties with West

By Eric Hall
Reuters

DUBAI — Iran's release of a jailed Briton is the first fruit of renewed ties with London but Tehran is under pressure to do more to cement relations with the outside world, according to Western diplomats in the Gulf.

Since the August ceasefire in the Gulf war, Tehran has moved fast to reopen doors which were slammed after the 1979 revolution and during its eight-year war with Iraq.

Iran has renewed diplomatic ties with France, Canada and Britain and has proffered the olive branch to Arab Gulf states which gave varying degrees of support to Iraq during the war.

Britain Nicholas Nicola, arrested two years ago for illegally entering Iran and being in possession of two weapons, was released Monday.

Another Briton, Roger Cooper, is still imprisoned for alleged spying.

Britain and Iran said Nicola's release was a major step forward in relations, but diplomats said Iran still faced a problem of credibility in the eyes of Western and neighbouring Arab states.

"They are having difficulty living down their past," said one Western diplomat.

The diplomats said this tendency to expect the worst of Iran was reflected most recently after the crash of a Pan Am airliner in Scotland Dec. 21

when an anonymous caller told Western news agencies that a little-known group linked to Iran was responsible.

Iranian officials moved quickly to deny this and affirmed that Iran stood against terrorism.

But events in Iran's recent past still sit uneasily in the minds of many and give even wild allegations the power to harm Iran's new image of peace, the diplomats said.

Such incidents as the 1979 detention of U.S. hostages in Tehran and the 1983 destruction of U.S. marine headquarters in Beirut by Iranian-linked bombers remain major blocks to improved trust from Washington's point of view, they said.

Pro-Iranian radicals are believed to be holding most of the 17 Westerners missing and believed kidnapped in Lebanon.

When an Iranian gunboat stopped a British tanker in the Gulf this month to check its papers, there was immediate concern that Iran could be showing its military muscle again in sea lanes which only months earlier were lit by burning tankers. The incident proved to be a misunderstanding.

Internal rifts

But divisions in Iran are as much a threat to its diplomatic initiatives as are the views about its intentions.

The threat is partly due to a

continued split in the government between those who wish to come out of isolation and those who wish to sustain the ideals of the revolution, diplomats said.

"There is still a little pushing and shoving going on in Tehran. The jury is still out," said a Western diplomat.

In the Gulf, Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran last April after accusing it of enemy-like acts.

Tehran's relations with some other Gulf states were severely strained by attacks on their shipping during the war and by suggestions that Iran was linked to sabotage attempts in Bahrain and Kuwait.

But last week members of the Gulf Cooperation Council

(GCC), grouping Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, made it clear they wanted better relations with Iran.

When all the diplomatic niceties are resolved the focus returns to deadlocked peace talks with Iraq.

While the guns on the Gulf war fronts have been silent for more than four months, they are still in place and could be rapidly brought into action should the fragile ceasefire break down.

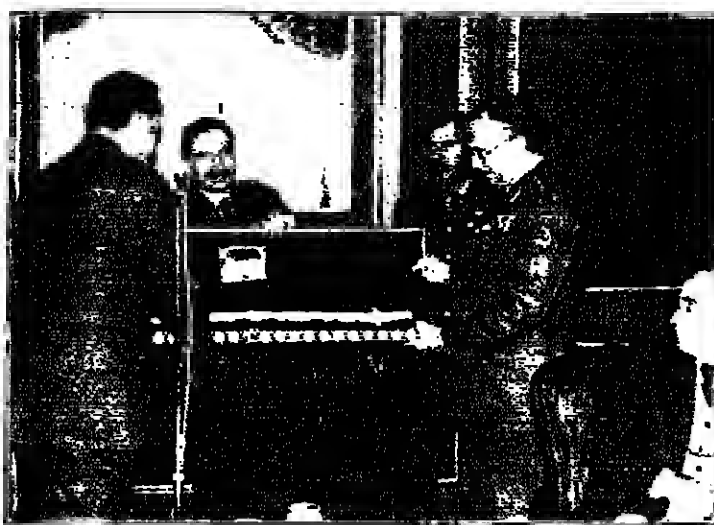
For those in power in the region and many nations beyond its borders, the thought of preventing a renewed Gulf war is a major spur to fostering relations with Iran.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION		USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS		MARKET PRICES		FOR FRIDAY	
Tel: 773111-19		NIGHT DUTY		Upper/lower price in Jds per kg.		Tel: 773111-19	
PROGRAMME ONE		AMMAN:		Apples		PROGRAMME ONE	
15:30	Koran	Dr. Hisham Abu Arqoub	893122	Banana	300 / 400	16:00	Koran
16:00	Children programmes	Dr. Daoud Al-Sunboun	778526	Banana (Mukammal)	300 / 250	16:30	Children programme
17:15	Local programme	Dr. Musa Bashir	615487	Beans	440 / 400	17:00	Religious programme
17:30	Programme on Jordan	Dr. Joseph Issa	778103	Broad beans	650 / 500	17:30	Friday's prayer
18:00	News summary	Firas pharmacy	669192	Cabbage	130 / 100	18:00	Religious programme
18:05	World Reports	Ferdows pharmacy	778339	Carrots	260 / 200	18:30	Religious seminar
18:20	Local programme	Al Asma pharmacy	637055	Cauliflower	190 / 120	19:00	Sports programme
18:30	"Alpha"	Naiqouk pharmacy	625672	Cucumbers	360 / 300		
19:15	Health programme	Al Salam pharmacy	636730	Dates	625 / 500		
19:40	Programme review	Yacoub pharmacy	649485				
20:00	News in Arabic	Shamsani pharmacy	637660				
20:30	Programme on the Press						
20:45	Local series						
21:45	Programme review						
21:55	Programme on Islamic art						
22:40	Arabic film						
23:00	News summary in Arabic						
23:10	Film (cont'd.)						
PRAYER TIMES		EMERGENCIES		HOSPITALS		PRAYER TIMES	
05:00	Fajr	Civil Defence Directorate	661111	AMMAN:		06:00	Fajr
06:30	(Sunrise) Dhuhr	Civil Defence Emergency	630341	Husseini Medical Centre	813813/2	11:30	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:30	Dhuhr	Rescue	199	Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn.	642316	12:30	Dhuhr
14:23	Asr	Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777	Al-Jalal Maternity	642362	14:23	Asr
16:46	Maghrib	Fire Brigade	198, 891228	Mallat, J. Amman	636140	16:46	Maghrib
18:07	Isha			Palestine, Shamsani	664171/4	18:08	Isha
CHURCHES		WEATHER		SHAMSANI HOSPITAL		PROGRAMME TWO	
It will be partly cloudy and another rise on temperature will occur. Winds will be light and variable becoming southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.		Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.		669131		17:30	
Min./max. temp.		St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.		University Hospital		19:00	
4 / 10		Antman International Church Tel. 685326.		Al-Muhsin Hospital		19:15	
3 / 18		Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 81295.		The Islamic, Abdal		19:30	
1 / 12		Rainbow Congregation Tel. 822605.		Al-Ahli, Abdal		19:45	
8 / 19		The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 821264		Al-Muhajreen		20:00	
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCH, Tel. 632785.		CHURCHES		Al-Bashir, J. Adrafeh		20:30	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.		De la Salle Church Tel. 661757		Army, Marja		21:00	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.		De la Salle Church Tel. 622666		Queen Abla Hospital		21:10	
Agachan Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 625341.		Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 773331.		Amal Hospital		21:30	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.		Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.		Zaqqa Govt. Hospital		21:40	



PRINCE HASSAN VISITS GHQ: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Wednesday visited the Jordanian Armed Forces Headquarters where he was received by Chief of Staff General Fathi Abu Taleh, a number of his aides, and the Armed Forces Inspector general. Prince Hassan discussed with Abu Taleh matters of concern to the Armed Forces (Petra photo).



SHARIF ZAID HONOURED: Chief of Staff General Fathi Abu Taleh Wednesday hosted a reception in honor of the Royal Hashemite Court Field Marshal Sharif Zaid Ibn Shaker. The reception was attended by the directors of the Public Security Department, the Intelligence Department, the Civil Defence Department, and the National Medical Institution in addition to the Royal Air Force commander, the Jordanian Armed Forces Inspector general, and senior Armed Forces officers. At the end of the reception Abu Taleh presented a token gift to Sharif Zaid. (Petra)

Cabinet approves raising volume of trade with Iraq

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — The council of ministers Wednesday approved minutes issued by the joint Jordanian-Iraqi Higher Committee meeting which was held in Baghdad from Dec. 14 to Dec. 15, under the co-chairmanship of Prime Minister Zaid Rifai and Iraqi First Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yassin Ramadan.

The committee agreed on raising the volume of exchanged goods between Iraq and Jordan to \$800 million in 1989. It decided to raise the annual quota of Jordanian and Iraqi trade centres to \$75 million each per annum and to allow the two sides to hold industrial trade fairs in Amman and Baghdad to sell \$2 million worth of products directly to the public.

Each country will be given preferential treatment in trade conducted by either side.

The council of ministers also appointed Suleiman Dajani as Jordan's non-resident ambassador to Thailand and Nepal in addition to his current position as ambassador to India.

Hindawi to head higher council of education

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — The council of ministers Wednesday announced the formation of the higher Council of Education which is to be chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Thougban Hindawi.

The council which passes decisions on all matters related to universities and community colleges will include as members: the following: minister of Higher Education who will also be deputy chairman, minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, president of the Civil Service Commission, secretary general of the Higher Council for Science and Technology, president of the Yarmouk University, secretary general of the Ministry of Planning, secretary general of the Ministry of Education, director of education at the Jordanian Armed Forces, director of education at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), director general of the Department of Statistics, dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Jordan, director general of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company, Dr. Ishaq Al Farhan, Dr. Rima Khalaf, Dr. Victor Billich, Dr. Amal Bakir, Ms. Nabila Wahbeh, and the director of the Curricula Department at the Ministry of Education.

CARTOGRAPHY GRADUATES: A group of students graduated Wednesday from the Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre (RJGC) after completing a 27 month training course in cartography. The 14 students, mostly from Bahrain, were trained in drawing maps with the help of topographic surveys, aerial photography. They also took the help of mathematical and underfield training. The centre's director, Oqalah, Duhimat, presented diplomas and gifts to the graduates at a ceremony attended by a number of guests. (Petra)

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- An art exhibition by Friends of Plastic Art in Gulf countries at the National Gallery.
- The youth's art exhibition which displays 101 paintings showing the different aspects of social life in Jordan at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- An exhibition of works by Contemporary Arab Artists at Al Wasiti Art Gallery.
- An exhibition of paintings by Jordanian artist Farouk Lambaz at Alia Art Gallery — 5:30 p.m.
- The Jordanian plastic art exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre.

POETRY RECITAL

- A poetry recital by the Arab poet Abdul Rahman Al Abnoudi, at Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation — 6:00 p.m.

FILMS

- Chinese films "Beijing Kababs" and "The Loner" are shown Thursday and Friday respectively at the Royal Cultural Centre — 7:00 p.m.
- A feature film entitled "On the Water Front" at the American Centre — 7:00 p.m.



Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday chairs a meeting of the committee for the development of the Jordan Valley (Petra photo).

Committee discusses development of touristic sites in Jordan Valley

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday chaired a committee meeting on the protection of the environment and development of touristic sites in the Jordan Valley.

The committee meeting, which was held at Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF), discussed the progress on recommendations made in earlier meetings of the committee and discussed the recommendations of the national development meeting which was held in Amman in November under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein.

The committee introduced a few executive recommendations aimed at dealing with environmental problems and allocated responsibilities to different departments to continue the studies on the relevant issues and present solutions.

The projects reviewed by the committee dealt with establishing national parks and serviced picnic areas in the Jordan Valley with a view to providing maximum basic services to the public.

The committee reviewed a

On the issue of the development of South Shuneh, a proposal was accepted by the committee to establish a South Shuneh Development Council which will be assigned the duty to coordinate between the private and public sectors.

The council would work with the municipality of South Shuneh on projects to develop and beautify the area.

The next meeting of the committee was scheduled for the end of January 1989.

draft law to protect the area from pollution as a result of discarded plastic waste, solid and liquid garbage left by visitors, as well as

dealing with problems of natural mature which attracts flies and is a nuisance to the public.

The committee also recommended a comprehensive study of the areas visited by the public in the Jordan Valley, with a view to providing these areas with waste disposal services and developing the area touristically.

The committee welcomed a suggestion from the private sector to establish a factory in the Jordan Valley which would be able to deal with the problem of plastic waste and recycling it. The committee asked the Jordan Valley Authority to speed up work on this suggestion and implement it.

QUEEN OPENS CULTURAL SEASON: Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday opened a seven-day plastic art season — 1988 at the Royal Cultural Centre. The season displays more than 200 pieces of art including paintings, ceramics, and graphics. It also includes several pieces of art by their Royal Highnesses Princess Alia, Princess Wijdan Ali and Princess Fahruhna Zaid. Present at the opening ceremony was Minister of Culture and National Heritage Dr. Mohammad Hammouri, the ministry's secretary general and senior officials, in addition to a number of artists. The minister termed the season as an event designed to bolster and consolidate the cultural and artistic movement in Jordan. (Petra)

Yarmouk to receive JD 2m housing loan from SSC

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) is to lend Yarmouk University JD 2 million to help construct residential quarters for university staff, according to an agreement signed here Wednesday.

The agreement was signed by SSC Director General Mahdi Al Farhan and University President Mohammad Hamdan.

Earlier this year Yarmouk University awarded a contract to a local company to start constructing residential quarters for female students at the cost of JD 4,405 million, and the project was set to be completed in 700 days.

The project also entails buildings for services and utilities, such as volleyball, basketball, a tennis court and others.



Social Security Corporation Director General Mahdi Al Farhan and Yarmouk University President Mohammad Hamdan Wednesday sign a loan agreement in Amman (Petra photo).

The SSC grants loans for housing projects, especially those to benefit government employees and citizens employed in the private sector who are covered by the SSC laws, as well as universities and organisations.

In October Farhan told a press conference in Amman that the SSC has spent JD 37 million in benefits to 130,000 individuals, out of a total of 500,000 who are covered by the SSC, and made investments in various sectors and projects totalling JD 82 million.

Beneficiaries from the SSC programmes get pension when they reach the age of retirement, for occupational injuries, sicknesses and disability.

The SSC, which started off in 1980 with a JD 5 million capital has now accumulated JD 82 million and out of the JD 82 million that went into investments, JD 36 million are now benefiting local industries and JD 24 million have been invested in tourist projects.

Students taking vocational courses begin exams

AMMAN (J.T.) — A total of 8,839 students taking vocational courses at the Tawjihi level in government schools of Jordan, Wednesday sat for the first session of the mid-year examinations set by the Ministry of Education.

The director of the ministry's Examinations Department, Abdul Rahman Shubeilat, said the examinations begin daily at nine in the morning to give ample time to the students to reach their assigned halls.

On Thursday a total of 58,618 students will take the first session of Tawjihi examinations, in the scientific and literary streams, in addition to the vocational streams which include nursing, commercial, agricultural, industrial

streams and hotel management. The first examination which was scheduled for Tuesday was postponed due to the bad weather conditions that prevailed in Jordan.

According to Shubeilat 768 examination halls have been assigned of which 254 halls are in Amman alone and the rest distributed in the Irbid, Zarqa, Balqa, Karak, Mafrqa, Ma'an and Tafleh governorates.

NEW MAP OF JORDAN: The Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre (RJGC) has published a map of the Kingdom for public use at a scale of 1/750,000 showing Jordan's tourist sites in addition to the plans of major cities in the country. The RJGC deems the recently published map as "indispensable" to tourists and visitors. Copies of the map can be obtained from the RJGC at Jubeiba, near the Ministry of Higher Education.

Earlier this month the Ministry of Education announced that students in the occupied West Bank schools will take the General Secondary School Certificate (Tawjihi) examinations only once and at the end of the current 1988-1989 scholastic year in June 1989.

Schools in the occupied lands have been closed for more than a year because of the uprising.

Ministry studies market needs for frozen meat

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — The Ministry of Supply has not taken a final decision on the importation of frozen meat and is currently conducting a detailed study on the local market needs of this commodity, according to Ministry Secretary General Abdullah Al Hawamdeh.

The ministry, he said, is studying the meat situation in Jordan as a whole to maintain a balance between local production and imports. It hopes to stimulate the animal husbandry and increase animal wealth.

He said that the Ministry of Supply was cooperating with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Armed Forces on the best specifications of frozen meat and the best terms under which this type of meat can be imported for the local consumers.

Hawamdeh said that Jordan must have sufficient number of qualified stores to deal with the frozen meat for which extra care must be taken to ensure it would not be mixed with the fresh meat.

On the existing centres and hutcheries that sell imported fresh meat, Hawamdeh told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the ministry is currently looking for a way to help their owners to

resume as of Jan. 8.

To cover the temporary shortage of fresh meat, he said, the Ministry of Supply has provided the military and civil consumer corporations with additional amounts of poultry meat.

Hawamdeh said the Ministry of Supply had reached agreement with the local food merchants not to raise the prices of foodstuff without first consulting with the ministry, which is currently conducting a study on the prices of dried milk upon request of the importers.

Hawamdeh told Petra that the Ministry of Supply stores are resuming the process of selling barley and hram now at subsidised prices, a process which had been undertaken previously by the Jordan Cooperative Organisation.

He said the ministry will provide the animal feed from now on in accordance with the number of the farm animals owned by each farmer.

HAI HASSAN MEETS UAE ENVOY: Transport and Telecommunications Minister Khaled Al Haj Hassan Wednesday discussed with UAE Ambassador in Amman Mohammad Jassim Shukur cooperation in the fields of transport and telecommunications. (Petra)

CDD teams praised for saving tourists from floods in Petra

AMMAN (J.T.) — Civil Defence Department (CDD) teams were praised by foreign embassies in Amman for rescuing seven foreign tourists besieged by floods and snow in the ancient Nabatean city of Petra during the storm over the past three days.

Other CDD teams saved seven families in the Jizan area near Qatraneh being cut off by rain water and snow, according to reports in the local press Wednesday.

The reports said that the rain water flooded many homes in Jizan, Mumia, and Bathan near Karak and the CDD men removed the residents to safer ground.

The storm, which brought in heavy rain and snow in many parts of the country, has now receded as the low depression moved north eastward towards Iraq, according to the Department of Meteorology.

Ministry of Agriculture officials said that the reservoir behind the King Talal Dam has now stored 55 million cubic metres of water out of a total capacity of 90 million cubic metres, and that underground water has been replenished.

The storm caused damage to property and cars, disrupted communications and telephone lines in many regions and caused some injuries, but no deaths were reported.

The Public Security Department (PSD) however reported the death of a 38-year-old man in Salt due to asphyxiation.

It said the man and three of his friends all of Egyptian nationality had lit a charcoal fire in their room to warm themselves during the storm and did not let fresh air in.

The police in Irbid also reported that the body of a nine-year-old boy was found lying behind a factory building in the Irbid camp and was taken to the Princess Basma Hospital in Irbid for autopsy to determine the cause of death.

GUVS to contribute JD 40,000 to Madaba rehabilitation centre

MADABA (Petra) — The General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) will contribute JD 40,000 to a projected centre for the rehabilitation of handicapped people which is sponsored by the Saladdin Charitable Society, according to an announcement here Wednesday.

The announcement, made by the society president, said that the Ministry of Public Works and Housing has now completed work on designs and engineering plans for the project, the feasibility studies of which were carried out

by the Queen Alia Jordan Social Welfare Fund (QAF).

The president said that the project was expected to offer rehabilitation and special education services to some 1,000 children from the Madaba district found by the QAF to be suffering from different handicaps.

He said work on the construction of the project is expected to start early in 1989.

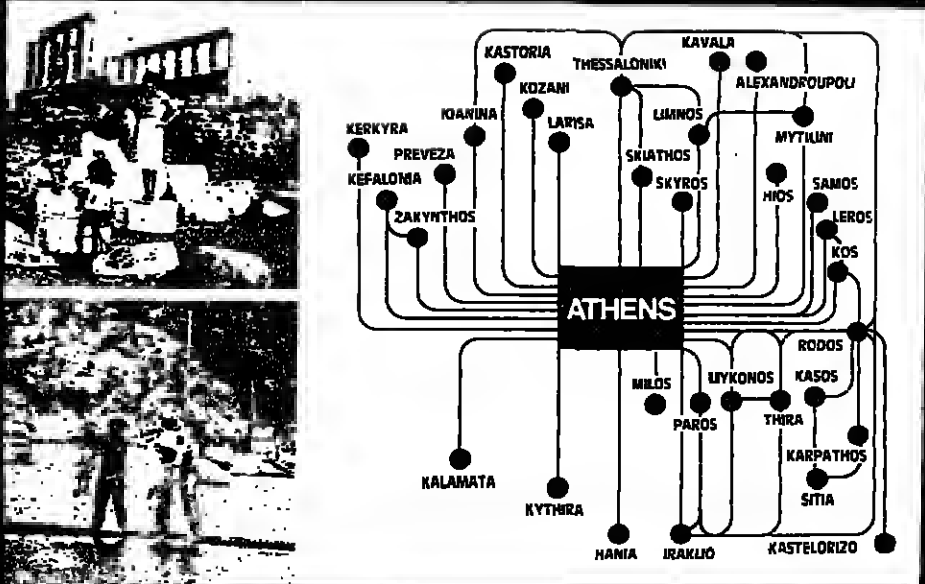
According to plans, the project entails building classrooms, playgrounds, meeting halls, gardens and workshops for vocational

training, and the whole project is expected to cost JD 120,000.

Referring to other activities, the society president said a dress-making workshop is now operational and typing lessons are being given free of charge to young women from needy families. A number of scholarships have also been awarded to poor students at community colleges.

In addition, he said, the society has provided a health clinic to offer treatment to the handicapped children and has opened a library for students.

OLYMPIC'S WORLDWIDE FLIGHTS



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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

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Israel's ostrichism

EGYPT'S President Hosni Mubarak may have gambled and lost over his insistence that his proposed visit to Israel be made contingent on Israel's acceptance to engage the PLO in talks leading to an overall settlement of the Palestinian conflict. But this is besides the point. What is even more relevant is that Cairo is putting all its weight behind the PLO as the principal interlocutor to any negotiations on the resolution of the Palestinian question. Equally important is the fact that Egypt is drifting further and further away from the Camp David accords as basis for future negotiations on the Arab-Israeli conflict. All such signals from Egypt lend added force to the credentials of Egypt as the heart and spirit of the Arab World and whose return to the Arab fold and the Arab League must become an Arab national request.

Moreover, Mubarak's conditional offer to visit Israel is clearly due to the worldwide recognition that Tel Aviv is seeking to throw red herrings in the path of the emerging international mainstream on the future course of the Arab-Israeli talks. Israel's continued ostrichism in the face of new realities in the Middle East can fool no one, not even the Israeli people themselves. There is no way Israel's aging leadership can turn the political clock back. The sooner they come to terms with the recent facts in the Middle Eastern theatre, the better for all the parties concerned.

That is why Mubarak's conditional offer to travel to Tel Aviv is sound and well appreciated worldwide. In so doing President Mubarak has served Israel with notice that the false baits that it is offering to the Arab countries cannot and will not reverse the tide that has picked up momentum in the wake of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's utterance of the magic words in Geneva few weeks ago — i.e., acceptance of the U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and Israel's right to exist and the rejection of terrorism in all its forms. Thus Israel's delaying tactics can mean only one thing at the end: much important time and opportunities would go down the drain and Israel's talk about new peace overtures based on a modified version of Camp David accords would remain much ado about nothing.

ARABIC PRESS EDITORIALS

THE Arab-Israeli conflict entered a new phase with the announcement by the PLO of a Palestinian state and its acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Al Ra'i Arabic daily said in an editorial Wednesday. The paper said that the announcement was coupled with a reaffirmation of the right of all states in the Middle East to live in peace and security, thus creating an opportune moment for the U.S. to announce its long-awaited dialogue with the PLO. All these developments, the paper noted, have paved the way for an international peace conference which sooner or later is bound to convene with the participation of all parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In view of this situation, Arab leaders are bound to maintain and strengthen their consultations and coordination of policies with the PLO and Jordan to maintain the peace momentum and to deal with any eventualities. Close coordination among the Arabs is needed now also in view of Israel's plans to launch a world-wide campaign to thwart the PLO's quest for peace, the paper said.



Writing in Al Ra'i daily Wednesday the newspaper's editor Rakan Al Majali paid tribute to the efforts of the Greater Amman Municipality and the Civil Defence Department in dealing with the effects of rain and snow in and around the capital over the past three days. But the writer says that the non-stop rains over a three-day period revealed certain faults and deficiencies mainly connected with the designs of streets and roundabouts, which tend to obstruct efforts to drain away rain water and keep the streets open for traffic. The writer cites as an example the Interior Ministry roundabout which he says was flooded with water causing a traffic jam, which indicates clearly that the designers failed to take into account certain measures to help drain the water away from the streets. He says many streets, especially in the western districts of Amman, were blocked with snow which could have easily been dealt with by the use of salt that comes out as a by-product at the Potash plants.

Al Dustour daily wrote Wednesday on Israel's total isolation from the rest of the world community which prompted Tel Aviv to opt for even stricter policies and more extremist stands. By taking this adamant position vis-a-vis peace and talks with the PLO, Israel believes that it can show the world that it truly wants peace, said the paper. It said by presenting to the world the Camp David accord as the only means of arriving at peace with the Arabs and solving the Palestine problem, Israel has proved that it has become bankrupt of ideas on the political scene, and incapable to deal with the ever escalating uprising in areas under its control.

Sawt Al Shaab tackled the current moves within the Arab World in support of the Palestinians and the PLO in their quest to reach a durable peace and restore Arab rights. Following the historic proclamation of the Palestinian state and the PLO's acceptance of U.N. Security Council resolutions there can be no alternative to concerted Arab action that can come from an Arab summit, the paper noted. It said that backing for the Palestinians is now needed more than at any time in the past in view of Israel's planned campaign to abort the PLO's moves towards peace and the on-going PLO-U.S. dialogue that would lead to that end.

Playing the right diplomatic cards

By P.V. Vivekanand

WITH Kenya's decision to restore diplomatic relations with Israel, the number of black African countries maintaining full ties with the Jewish state has gone up to eight; that is, not to speak of South Africa. The Kenyan decision, which based itself on the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) recognition of Israel's "right to exist" and what is perceived as improved chances for peace in the Middle East, is indeed Nairobi's own affair. But, for us in the Middle East, there are two ways of looking at the development.

First of all, an important African country like Kenya resuming full ties with Israel signifies the extent of inroads that the Jewish state has made into Africa and reflects another Israeli diplomatic gain. Well, it would have been presumptuous on the part of the Arab World to expect African countries to continue to maintain diplomatic isolation of Israel, particularly when we take into consideration the fact that the reason for African countries to break ties with the Jewish state was its occupation of African territory; Egypt's Sinai. If anything, the return of Sinai to Egypt in 1980 should have triggered a wave of resumption of formal ties between African states and Israel. Obviously, it was Arab influence as well as many African countries' realisation of the injustice done to the Palestinians that thwarted such a course of events.

Taken as an individual case, it is no surprise that Kenya resumed ties with Israel since it was well known for decades that there were strong informal links between Nairobi and Tel Aviv. The most outstanding pointer was the facilities that Kenya offered to Israel during the Entebbe hijack affair in 1975.

On the other hand, the Kenyan decision to restore ties with Israel means another important African country having direct conduit to the Jewish state, though it might be wishful thinking to imagine Kenya playing any meaningful role as a mediator between the Arabs and Israel — much more heavy-weight countries have tried and given up in the face of Israel's intransigence and one-track mind when it comes to return of occupied Arab territories.

It is however strange that Kenya, which professes support for Arab causes, failed to recognise the newly-declared State of Palestine while extending full diplomatic ties with Israel. One wonders where the logic lies in Nairobi's contention that the PLO's acceptance of the "existence" of Israel has removed all obstacles in Kenya's desire to renew its recognition of the Zionist state without having to extend the same diplomatic gesture to the State of

Palestine.

So, where does it leave the Arabs? Upset because another African state resumed ties with Israel? Upbeat because it offers yet another diplomatic channel to Israel to pursue peace, now that it has been resoundingly recorded that the only means to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict is through peaceful, civilised, meaningful negotiations?

Within the context of diplomatic relations, it is not important in itself whether Israel secures more and more international recognition as a state. What is paramount is how to make the best out of the situation towards advancing the cause of peace in the Middle East, and how to play the cards right and bring about a change in the apparent Israeli conviction that its military might is the answer to its problems, "security" and otherwise.

In light of the emerging trend in international thinking and regional conflicts towards leaning on diplomacy as the means to settle disputes, one cannot but help notice an approach that makes allowances for the fact that formal links between two sides are the first step towards developing a dialogue and, if played right, diplomatic relations could be an ace in the hole. The Arab World is not short of friends in the Third World and their relations, or the lack of ties, with Israel could be a trump that the Arabs could use to pile additional pressure on the Jewish state to listen to the voice of reason.

Perhaps, one could say that Nairobi's decision was premature since Israel has not reciprocated the moderation and realism reflected in the PLO's peace strategy based on a two-state solution. On the contrary, the very foundation for the coalition in power in Israel is rejection of an independent Palestinian state and refusal to deal with the PLO. One could have wished that Kenya or any other country sympathetic towards the Arab cause could have held out the promise of diplomatic relations in return for a thaw in Israel's intransigence and defiance over calls for an international peace conference.

That raises the issue of relations between the Soviet Union and Israel. For all practical purposes, the Israeli leadership appears to believe that a Soviet decision to resume ties with Israel is just round the corner. The overt anxiety that the Israelis showed in extending aid to the victims of the Dec. 7 earthquake in Armenia also seems to have added another solid stone in the careful scenario that the Israeli officialdom is building; that is, of course, not demeaning the humanitarian element in offering aid to victims of a natural disaster, whether in the Soviet Union or in the Fiji Islands or whether the aid comes from Israel or New Hebrides.

At the same time, we cannot brush aside the fact that Israel's

main aim in prodding Moscow into resuming ties is increased Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. Successive Soviet leaderships have held out on this for decades. But a significant increase in the number of Soviet Jews leaving the Soviet Union is evident these days. It might be premature to judge what it means, whether it is a result of the "glasnost" and "perestroika" introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev or of a tacit Soviet-Israeli agreement. In either case, the net result is simple: Israel might be getting what it hoped for — a gradual increase in Soviet emigration. The only problem that lies here for Israel is the lack of direct air links with the Soviet Union to ensure that no Jewish emigrant escapes the Israeli net. Obviously, one can understand the considerations behind the Israeli concern and anxiety to launch direct Soviet-Israeli flights. It will not be surprising to hear soon that the two sides have reached agreement on this issue, thus taking care of one of Israel's most important preoccupations shrouded in its quest for diplomatic ties with Moscow.

Such a scenario — with Israel gaining in more ways than one while the Middle East peace process remains grounded because of its intransigence — does indeed carry a bitter taste. Given the positions declared by Israel over its intentions to handle the Palestinian problem, it is a very disturbing course of events, particularly that there would be little incentive for the Israelis to bow to international pressure spearheaded by the Soviet Union to accept a just and fair settlement to the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Furthermore, incidents like the recent hijacking of a Soviet plane where Israel extended the magnanimous gesture of promptly returning the aircraft and hijackers to the Soviet Union are specific instances that point to a dedicated Israeli desire to favour talks with Moscow. Such calculated moves did have their desired impact, starting from the professed public thanks that the Soviet leadership conveyed to the Israelis.

From official Soviet statements and declarations, there is little doubt that the Kremlin leadership is aware of the pitfalls in dealing with Israel, and there is no significant shift in Moscow's support for the Arab cause as a matter of principle. But that should not be a self-assurance for the Arabs to take the Soviet Union for granted and divert attention to elsewhere in the international scene while Israel is left free to use its own brand of coercion and conjuring, tricks with Moscow and others to suit its own interests without having to produce anything in return to contribute to the peace process.

The writer is the political editor of the Jordan Times.

Bush shows cautious approach on budget, diplomacy

By Michael Gelb

Reuter

WASHINGTON — Confronted by a daunting budget deficit as well as tantalising opportunities to promote Middle East peace and U.S.-Soviet accord, President-elect George Bush says caution will be his watchword in the White House.

"I'm one who always has been a little bit cautious, and yet I don't want to seem negative," Bush said at a recent news conference when asked what he thought of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's dramatic pledge to cut Soviet military forces by 500,000 men and 10,000 tanks.

Would Bush consider something similar? "I am interested in progress but I want it to be prudent," he replied.

On the Middle East, too, the man who is about to take over from Ronald Reagan expressed a meticulously careful view of possibilities for opening a U.S. dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) — just before Reagan approved that historic move.

"Before we have a dialogue with the PLO, the signals have to be clear, unmistakable, unambiguous... so that no one can argue with what has been said," Bush told reporters. Then, an hour or two later, he endorsed Reagan's decision to open that very dialogue, aides said.

As these and other episodes suggest, caution and prudence are likely to be familiar descriptors in the presidency of Bush, which begins with a gala inauguration on Jan. 20.

That will go as well for the domestic problems, and especially the budget deficits now running

about \$150 billion a year, which will get even higher priority than the array of challenges on the diplomatic front.

"I can't imagine anything that would dominate the first 100 days of the administration more than the deficit," said one senior Bush aide who is slated for a key White House job.

Bush's prudent style of government will stand in sharp contrast to the unbridled enthusiasm Reagan exuded in pushing his conservative, super-patriot's vision of the world.

Restraint is characteristic of the president-elect, who considers himself "a practical man" and has spent the weeks since his Nov. 8 election victory over Democrat Michael Dukakis reaching out to political adversaries — including Dukakis — and reassuring U.S. allies.

"I'm not much for the airy and abstract," he has said. "I like what works. I'm not a mystic. I

'I'm vice president of the United States and I'll support this administration until I become president of the United States. I've done that for seven years and 11 months and I'm not going to change now.'

don't yearn to lead a crusade." This prudence has been underscored by his decision to staff the top levels of his administration with familiar professional government figures such as close friend James Baker as secretary of state, Brent Scowcroft as national security adviser, Richard Darman as budget director and many



George Bush

bachev at the 1986 Reykjavik summit to wipe out U.S. and Soviet-long range nuclear missile arsenals.

Ties with Moscow

Bush, by contrast, says a NATO summit to establish alliance arms control strategy must precede any summit between himself and Gorbachev. Bush insiders say a Bush-Gorbachev summit is not likely before the second half of the next year.

"There obviously are opportunities in the relationship with the Soviet Union," one senior Bush aide said. "George certainly has a sense of the reality of that opportunity."

But this aide emphasised that Bush also sees "the problems associated with over-optimism." He argued that the vice president "deserves credit for the self-discipline for not feeling obliged to just shove things out right now for the sake of getting headlines."

It was not immediately clear how Bush intended to proceed in the Middle East hut, to some extent, his manoeuvring room was restricted by Reagan's sudden Dec. 14 decision to clear the way for official U.S. talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Bush quickly expressed pleasure with that decision, keeping to his loyal lieutenant stance right to the end.

"I'm vice president of the United States and I'll support this administration until I become president of the United States," he has said. "I've done that for seven years and 11 months and I'm not going to change now."

His advisers say they expected he would adopt the same

approach to the fast-changing Middle East situation that he is pledging toward Moscow — to get his team together for what he calls "a hard Bush administration look at it."

Whatever evolves, Bush aides say, he will not follow Reagan's practice of delegating authority to develop policy.

"The vice president clearly has in mind a foreign policy agenda," one senior aide told Reuters. "George Bush will set that agenda personally and publicise that agenda personally."

On the budget deficit, America's top domestic issue, Bush has vowed to reduce red ink without

raising taxes or cutting the social security pension programme — a feat many economists say is impossible.

The challenge is complicated by a growing sense that a mps infusion of government money will be needed to shore up America's ailing savings and loan industry. Some nuclear safety experts also say it will cost as much as \$50 billion to overhaul leaky and dangerous atomic weapons production plants.

On top of those expenditures Bush hopes to step up government aid for education and child care and beef up enforcement of environmental laws.

OPEN FORUM

A choked constitution

AMERICA has been, and remains, the great constitutional laboratory for the entire world, as quoted by Joseph Magnat, a law professor in University of Ottawa, Canada (Time magazine, Jan. 6, 1987).

Indeed a certainty until the influential Jews choked some American policy makers. A very tremendous mistake which marred America's credibility as champion of human rights and the world's cradle of democracy.

Why should the majority of American people be misled by handful of greedy politicians?

What would the framers of the American constitution feel, knowing the nation they built is now the main advocate of oppression?

As in the speech of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, delivered in Geneva, it was clearly emphasised, he sought peace. Against terrorism, accepting U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 what more is expected from a man invoking a free nation for his people? The main factor antagonising the PLO peace initiative is the stubbornness of the Israeli prime minister and the tolerance of the U.S. administration.

Bill A. Cascutan
Amman, Jordan

Herculian task awaits winner of Salvadorean elections

By Douglas Grant Mine

The Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR. El Salvador — This long-suffering Central American nation has embarked on a presidential campaign against a backdrop of surging political murder. The winner's prize is to preside over economic stagnation and a stalemated civil war.

Each passing week before the March 19 election lengthens the list of dead, maimed and displaced in the 9-year-old civil war, while bringing no prospects for resolution of the Marxist insurgency, through negotiations or by force.

The result is a tiredness of spirit among many of the country's 5.5 million people, especially the two-thirds who eke out a meager living raising corn and beans on small plots.

"We feel fear at seeing combatants of one side or the other, because we're the ones who get caught in between," said Mercedes Franco, a 25-year-old campesino (peasant) from Tenancingo, a zone of conflict in the middle of El Salvador. The nation is half the size of Denmark.

The main contenders for the presidency are Alfredo Cristiani of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) — the resurgent right — and Fidel Chavez Mena of the incumbent Christian Democrats.

Cristiani, a U.S.-educated coffee grower and businessman, has

a narrow lead, but far from a majority, in the latest reliable poll.

ARENA, as his party is known, trounced the flagging Christian Democrats in last March's municipal and legislative elections, winning an outright majority in the 60-seat unicameral legislature.

One new factor is the political left, which is running candidates for the first time since the mid-1970s. Leftist leaders acknowledge they have no chance of winning, but say they hope to drum up support for negotiations. ARENA, citing its own polls, claims it has the election wrapped up. But Sigifredo Ochoa, a retired army colonel, legislator and one of ARENA's top leaders, charged recently that some sectors in Washington intend to "impose" Chavez Mena as president.

ARENA claims the United States, which has provided El Salvador with more than \$3 billion in aid this decade, helped rig 1984 and 1985 elections to ensure Christian Democratic victories.

"If ARENA is deprived of its rightful victory, well, someone asked me if we did not win the election would we resort to nationalist guerrilla warfare. And I say a frustrated people could do just that," Ochoa said.

The Christian Democrats, as well as local and international human rights groups, say ARENA was closely linked to death squads that killed thousands of



suspected leftists in the early 1980s. ARENA denies the charges.

The Christian Democrats' own popularity, however, has been drastically eroded by nearly five years of unfulfilled promises, economic stagnation and a widely held perception of official corruption.

They have not been able to make any progress toward ending the war, which pits about 7,000 Marxist-led guerrillas against the \$6,000-strong U.S.-backed armed forces.

President Jose Napoleon Duarte, the hemisphere's staunchest U.S. ally, is dying of liver cancer. Chemotherapy appears to have arrested its spread, and his most fervent hope is to be able to personally hand over power on June 1.

Duarte, 63, continues to work.

But his prestige and influence are greatly diminished.

"He has no power to do anything," said Ignacio Martin Baro, a Roman Catholic priest and vice-rector of the Central American University.

No one envisions guerrilla-government peace negotiations before the next administration takes over.

"It would be absurd to expose ourselves to a failure at this point," said one of Duarte's top advisers, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Three rounds of negotiations between 1984 and 1987 proved fruitless. The opposing positions have not changed significantly, and there is little besides increased war-weariness to foster hope of a breakthrough.

ARENA says it will talk with guerrillas, but Ochoa said in De-

cember that such discussions would not be negotiations. He said ARENA, in power, would propose a "national plan" drawn up with input from outside the party.

Ochoa contends the armed forces have had their hands tied by human rights concerns and other factors. He predicts government troops could win in about two years without restraints.

But the guerrillas constitute one of the most persistent insurgencies in modern Latin American history. In parts of five of the country's 14 provinces, they move freely and even oversee local authorities.

They enjoy the moral and material support of many campesinos. Even U.S. military advisers here admit the rebels are a thoroughly motivated fighting force.

The war's stalemate apparently has contributed to this year's steep rise in politically motivated killings — summary executions being blamed on the army, death squads and the guerrillas, and also being denied by each.

Tutela Legal, the Roman Catholic Church's legal aid office, counted 169 such killings in the first nine months of 1988, blaming 90 on the army, 46 on death squads and 33 on the rebels. That is a 70 per cent increase over the same period in 1987.

"There is growing frustration in the armed forces," said Martin Baro, the priest. "How are they not going to be frustrated if they've received (from the Uo-

ited States) all conceivable aid for eight years, everything they wanted and more, but still can't defeat the outnumbered and badly equipped guerrillas," he said.

The guerrillas have consumed every previous election this decade as "a farce" designed to further what they say is a U.S.-sponsored "counterinsurgency project."

Now leftist politicians, in exile for years before returning in 1987, are running as the democratic convergence and say the guerrillas grudgingly approve. But a degree of contradiction remains.

The guerrillas have mounted two nationwide offensives in the past three months. They have brought the fight increasingly to the capital, carrying out attacks in and around San Salvador.

On Radio Venceremos, their clandestine voice, they said, "organised and combative struggle is the alternative to the electoral manoeuvre."

But they have not overthrown a significant military position in 18 months, and army officers say the rebels are concentrating on "soft" targets.

The officers say that indicates rebel weakness relative to a year or so ago.

Martin Baro, who has had recent contact with guerrilla commanders, says the escalation is tactical.

"It is designed to give them better cards, by demonstrating force of arms, in a gradual negotiation," he said.

EN BREF

Otages français: fausse joie

La famille de Marie-Laure et Virginie Valente, 7 et 6 ans, attendait toujours mercredi le cadeau de Noël promis par Abou Nidal: la libération des deux fillettes, détenues au Liban depuis plus d'un an avec leur mère. Lundi, le porte-parole du groupe palestinien avait annoncé que les deux enfants avaient été libérées et faisaient route vers la France, "en guise de cadeau de Noël pour les enfants du monde et leur famille". Depuis, plus rien. Les Valente avaient été enlevées en novembre 1987 à bord du "Silco", en Méditerranée.

Arafat au Vatican

Le Pape Jean-Paul II a rencontré le 23 décembre Yasser Arafat au Vatican. Il lui a fait part de sa conviction qu'Israéliens et Palestiniens avaient "un droit fondamental identique sur leur patrie respective, à y vivre en liberté, dignité et sécurité, en harmonie avec leurs voisins".

Criquets: les fermes menacées

Le ministre de l'Agriculture a contacté des fournisseurs de pesticides et des représentants de sociétés agricoles en Jordanie, afin de rassembler tous les moyens de lutte qu'ils peuvent fournir pour permettre aux pays de faire face au danger des criquets pèlerins, qui menacent à présent les fermes et les régions agricoles.

Initiative de paix

Moubarak en Israël?

Le président égyptien Hosni Moubarak a fait savoir cette semaine qu'il n'exclut pas une visite en Israël, à la condition expresse que l'Etat hébreu accepte de discuter avec l'O.L.P. Si la visite a lieu, elle serait la première effectuée en Israël par un chef d'Etat arabe depuis celle du président égyptien Anwar El Sadate, en septembre 1979.



Hosni Mubarak

Il s'agit pour Moubarak de convaincre Israël de participer à une conférence internationale de paix au Proche-Orient, comme il en a exprimé le souhait à plusieurs reprises ces dernières années.

"Si cette visite pouvait aider à résoudre le problème palestinien et si elle contribuait à établir une paix juste, alors je suis prêt", a déclaré le président Moubarak dans une interview au journal koweïtien Al Anbaa. A Tel Aviv, un ex-félicité d'une telle initiative, mais le premier ministre Itzhak Shamir reste farouchement opposé à une négociation avec l'O.L.P.

Les propositions israéliennes remettant à l'ordre du jour la

formule des accords de Camp David sont vues d'un mauvais oeil au Caire, où l'on y décrie une manœuvre pour étouffer dans l'œuf les efforts de conciliation arabes.

Dans l'entourage de Shamir, un a annoncé lundi que le premier ministre israélien allait bientôt révéler un plan de paix envisageant une "auto-gestion" limitée des Palestiniens dans les territoires occupés. Cette idée se heurte à l'opposition des pays arabes.

Le front froid s'est à présent déplacé vers l'Irak et les températures sont à la hausse. (D'après J.T.)

même source. Un record a été enregistré à Jubaila, avec une couche de 15 cm de neige.

Selon la Défense civile, des lignes à haute tension ont été endommagées, ainsi que les routes bloquées par endroits par des pierres et de la terre drainées par les eaux. On déplore également des accidents de la route mineurs, notamment sur l'autoroute du désert. En raison des intempéries, les épreuves d'arabe du Tawjidi ont été reculées de deux jours.

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Le Liban sans Croix-Rouge

La décision du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (CICR) de retirer l'ensemble de ses délégués du Liban est une première pour l'organisation humanitaire suisse, qui comptait 17 délégués dans ce pays.

Les responsables du CICR à Genève... ont annoncé, le 20 décembre la suspension des opérations de la Croix-Rouge au Liban, en raison de menaces mettant en péril la vie de ses délégués. Le CICR n'a pas précisé l'origine de ces menaces. Peter Winkler, délégué suisse du CICR avant d'être pris en otage pendant un mois au Liban Sud, par des ravisseurs se réclamant du Fatah révolutionnaire d'Abou Nidal. Il avait été libéré le 16 novembre.

Le CICR n'avait jamais auparavant procédé à un retrait global d'un pays. En Ethiopie, au printemps dernier, il

s'était progressivement désengagé de certaines régions de ce pays parce qu'il considérait que son travail était entravé, mais des délégués étaient restés sur place en permanence.

Ce n'est pas la première fois non plus que les délégués du CICR font l'objet de menaces. En Angola, à la suite d'intimidations, le CICR avait gelé ses activités et placé ses membres en "stand-by". Des situations analogues s'étaient présentées dans d'autres pays africains, sans jamais entraîner, cependant, de retrait aussi hâtif et total que celui du Liban.

Le CICR est représenté au Proche-Orient depuis 1967. Il est opérationnel au Liban depuis 1975. Sa délégation dans ce pays, réduite à 17 membres en comptant une trentaine il y a un mois. (Avec AFP)

La France va célébrer le bicentenaire de la Révolution

89, l'année qui changea la face du monde

Bonne année 1989! 89, c'est aussi 1789, dit la France va fêter le bicentenaire. Une année de révolution décisive pour la démocratie dans le monde. Mais au départ, le soulèvement a été provoqué par un hiver froid, des ventres creux et des bourses plates. Récit des faits.

Anarchie et banqueroute... Deux maîtres mots qui caractérisent l'état de la France en ces premiers jours de 1789. Pourtant, avec ses vingt-six millions d'habitants, c'est le pays le plus puissant d'Europe. Jamais son prestige n'a été aussi grand. Ne vient-elle pas de gagner la guerre d'Amérique? Ses artistes, ses penseurs n'exercent-ils pas une influence considérable à travers le monde? Le médaille de son revers. L'indépendance des Etats-Unis a épuisé le trésor royal et les intérêts de la dette sont si élevés qu'ils la rendent insolvable. Les Caissees sont vides. Seule la levée d'un impôt auquel tous seraient assujettis pourrait remédier au désordre financier. Mais les classes privilégiées, Noblesse et Clergé, le refusent et les masses laborieuses, c'est-à-dire le Tiers-Etat (96% de la population) ne peuvent être pressurés davantage: elles versent déjà, en impositions diverses, plus de 50% de leurs revenus.

La concurrence anglaise a mis à mal l'industrie française et particulièrement le textile: en Champagne, dans le Lyonnais, en Normandie, les métiers à tisser ne fonctionnent qu'à 50%. D'où baisse des salaires et accroissement considérable de l'armée des sans-emplois. Et pour noircir le tableau, les terribles conditions climatiques que la France connaît depuis quelques mois, ajoutent à la détresse des campagnes dans

un pays à la population aux trois-quarts rurale. En juillet 1788, un orage, sans précédent, a ravagé une grande partie du territoire, détruisant en quelques heures la moitié des récoltes.

L'hiver 1787-88 est l'un des plus rigoureux du siècle. Le fleuves pris par les glaces n'acheminent plus les vivres et les bœufs cessent de tourner. Des bandes de salariés agricoles privés d'emploi battent la campagne. Dans les villes, en raison du froid, nombre d'artisans et de manoeuvres ont arrêté le travail. Disette, chômage, baisse des salaires, hausse du prix du pain... La colère gronde. Des émeutes

éclatent un peu partout. Sur le plan politique, le roi, homme sans caractère, s'est résolu, à rappeler à la tête du gouvernement, le banquier genevois Necker — le seul capable, peut-être, de sortir le pays de l'impasse. Le souverain se heurte à l'opposition quasi-systématique de la noblesse et du haut-clergé et il doit faire face à la rébellion des Parlements qui usent de plus en plus souvent du "droit de remontrances".

L'armée? Le pouvoir l'a profondément méconnaît depuis que

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L'autre grande préoccupation des Français, en ce début d'année, c'est la préparation des Etats Généraux que le roi s'est enfin décidé à convoquer pour le mois de mai et au cours desquels seront examinés les vœux du pays. Louis XVI veut croire qu'il en sortira une solution à la crise financière. La majorité de l'opinion, qui n'accepte plus les profondes inégalités, source à ses yeux de tous les maux du royaume, espère qu'ils déboucheront sur une réforme en profondeur d'un régime vieux de mille ans dont les structures craquent de partout. Pour elle, c'est aux Etats Généraux qu'il reviendra de rétablir l'ordre dans la maison.

Le roi accepte que le nombre des députés du Tiers soit doublé mais il ne se prononce pas sur le mode de scrutin. Votera-t-on par tête comme le réclament ardemment les représentants du peuple? Le débat enfle les esprits. Il est alimenté par le pamphlet de l'abbé Sieyès publié en ce mois de janvier: "Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-Etat? Tout. Qu'a-t-il été jusqu'à présent dans l'ordre politique? Rien. Que demande-t-il à devenir? Quelque chose."

Ce texte, au retentissement considérable, est un salissant résumé de ce que les philosophes ont assigné pour but au siècle des Lumières: le bonheur de l'humanité.

Le sang coule

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A holiday season of debt and hungry children

By George Gedda
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When Pan Am Flight 103 crashed last week, claiming more than 280 lives, the reaction was one of virtual universal horror. But the death toll was only a small fraction of the number of children under 5 who die almost unnoticed each day from hunger and disease worldwide.

If Christmas day was typical, about 38,300 such children from poor countries died, according to new estimates released by the United Nations Children's Fund. Put another way, the death toll from the Pan Am flight is equalled every 10 minutes or so in terms of children aged 5 and under.

These figures are derived from UNICEF's calculation that 14 million children under age 5 died in 1987, partly because so many countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa, impoverished by debt and other factors, are cutting back on social services.

UNICEF Executive Director James Grant said last week that 3 million of these children died last year "because they didn't have 50 cents worth of vaccine in them."

Poor transfer to rich

The situation apparently has changed little and may have even worsened in 1988. The World Bank reported last week that poorer countries are transferring their wealth to richer nations at record levels this year — 50 per cent more than in 1987.

The bank said the 17 most highly indebted countries of the Third World will give wealthy countries \$31.1 billion more than they receive, triple the amount of 1983. Crushing debt repayments mean less money left over for imports of basic human necessities such as food and medicine.

No region has been harder hit than Latin America, where per capita income is 8 per cent below 1980 levels.

The inter-American dialogue, a gathering of concerned citizens from throughout the hemisphere, said in a recent report the social consequences of Latin America's prolonged depression have been multiplying.

"The people of Latin America have seen their wages fall and their jobs disappear, their housing, schools, hospitals and other public service have deteriorated and they have endured food short-

ages and mounting street crime.

"Financially strapped governments have been unable to address such fundamental social problems as the vast gap between rich and poor, the deep poverty of rural areas and city slums, widespread malnutrition and high rates of infant mortality," the report said.

U.S. President-elect Bush seems to be aware of the problems that the \$1.3-trillion U.S. debt burden is causing Third World countries. Since his election, Bush has met with the presidents of Mexico and Argentina and the incoming president of Venezuela — all countries where foreign debt is a major political and economic issue.

Ease debt burden

Two days before release of the UNICEF report, Bush left the impression that his administration is likely to ask commercial banks to ease the debt burden of developing countries.

Bush said the issue "should be subject to a major review which will include not just the treasury but our national security people because we've got enormous problems, particularly in our own hemisphere... on Third World debt."



Let her eat!

U.S. policy on the debt issue was spelled out in September 1985 by then Treasury Secretary and now Secretary of State-designate James A. Baker III.

Baker's proposals for restoring growth in Latin America and elsewhere call for a combination of economic reforms in the de-

tor countries and new public and private lending to meet their capital needs.

But, as the inter-American dialogue report points out, Latin American governments have lost confidence in the Baker approach because it has not produced the resources it promised.

Milton Nascimento, Brazil's divine voice

By Miriam Jordan
Reuters

SAO PAULO — Brazilians say that if God sang, it would be with the voice of Milton Nascimento.

Nascimento's countrymen consider him one of a divine trio of musicians, alongside singer-poets Chico Buarque and Caetano Veloso.

His music is a fusion of samba, jazz and pop, ringing with everything from the Beatles to the sound of church bells, and it brings people to tears.

"Even if people don't understand the words in Portuguese they are stirred by the feeling transmitted in my songs," Nascimento recently told Reuters in Sao Paulo.

With his unique harmony of voice, melody and emotion Nascimento has won the admiration of prominent artists and personalities the world over.

Paul Simon, Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Sting have joined him on stage and in albums. Alvin Ailey, David Parsons and the French Ballet have invited him to write music for their choreography. In Paris he dined with President and

Mrs. Francois Mitterrand.

In 1989 he will add China and the Soviet Union to the long list of countries where he has played.

This year, after a 120-day tour which took him to 16 countries in Asia, Europe and North America, he is back home with a new record and show.

In Sao Paulo a full house sang and swayed to his 105-minute performance. From start to finish the audience seemed under the spell of the black man in white while he sang love ballads, poetry and odes to the poor.

When not strumming a guitar, his long hands danced in the air to follow the music. Rhythm demanding, he got up and wiggled a few samba steps. And at the end the audience's tireless applause brought him back for two encores.

The show was based on his latest album, "Miltons" — literally "1,000 tons" in Portuguese — which has been rated one of his best. Herbie Hancock's jazz piano and Nana Vasconcelos' vanguard percussion accompany him on the record.

"It's simple. You hear the piano, the voice, the guitar. All the sounds are in the fore-

ground," Nascimento said. As his voice climbs to high notes with ease, it resonates and reaches what a critic termed "regions never before explored" by a singer.

The voice is so angelic that it makes it all the more ironic that at the age of 10 little Milton failed voice class at school.

He was born 45 years ago in Rio de Janeiro and adopted by a white couple in the town of Tres Pontas in the state of Minas Gerais. They nurtured his musical talent from the start, giving him a harmonica when he was five. At 14 he got a guitar, which he hasn't put down since.

He made his debut with "travessia," for which he won the 1967 international song festival in Rio de Janeiro. But his career really took off in 1975 when American saxophonist Wayne Shorter invited him to record with him.

Miltons is his 26th album. Amnesty International invited him to be the Brazilian representative of the "Human Rights Now" concert which took place in Sao Paulo in October.

He dedicated his performance to Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga, one of Brazil's leading human rights campaigners. This year he and Casaldaliga wrote a musical mass to celebrate the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil.

The mass, Missa Dos Quilombos, brings African motifs into a Catholic ritual about blacks and freedom. In 1989 Nascimento will perform the mass at Notre Dame cathedral in Paris and in Barcelona and New York.

Denmark is his favourite country outside Brazil and he goes back there every year whether he performs or not.

"I'm crazy about Denmark. When I was a kid I used to... tell my buddies Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales. I've always had something about magic and fantasy and dreamed of going there."

He said his biggest thrill was to be chosen by Sting to open the Scandinavian pop festival near Copenhagen last summer.

What with all the recent travelling and popularity, the usually timid Nascimento seems to be coming out of his shell — or his cap.

He has shed his traditional denim overalls for chic silk white shirts, trousers and jacket in his shows. But he hasn't surrendered his cap, his eternal trademark.

He recalls with amusement why he began wearing a cap. "I was very late for an Alvin Ailey performance. My long, wavy curly hair was a mess... impossible to comb. So a friend gave me a cap to tuck it beneath."

"Then people said I looked charming and I never took it off."

The revival of an ancestral art: stained glass windows

THE traditional stained glass window is an assemblage of pieces of coloured glass, held together by grooved lines of lead which act as a framework and follow the outlines of the design.

Above a certain size, the excessive weight, in particular, can present a risk for the solidity of

the panels, which no longer conform to present-day safety standards for public buildings. Should monumental art therefore be deprived of its most dazzling means of expression?

In Toulouse, Michel and Daniel Bataillon, the very young artists of the "Atelier du Vitrail

d'Art" (Art Stained-Glass Workshop) were not resigned to this situation. They had the idea of assembling antique coloured or opal glass by sticking it "glass onto glass" onto an approved support (a classical sheet of security glass or laminated glass).

In order to apply their idea, which is based on high technology, in the way the products and material are made, they thought of the space industry, its experience and its reliability.

"Silovitrail" is thus the result of collaboration between a small workshop and a basic research laboratory (the Space Studies Centre for Radiation, which is a laboratory belonging to the French National Scientific Research Centre (CNRS), officially ratified by the University of Toulouse and chosen by the French Space Studies Centre (CNES)).

The adhesive used is a polyamide silicon elastomer made by Rhône-Poulenc. It is perfectly transparent. It has excellent mechanical properties (150% elongation) and there is no fear of the glass breaking. It is resistant to extreme temperatures (-100 to +200°C) and to atmospheric degradation. The accelerated ageing of a prototype was tested for six months in a climatic

chamber where it was exposed to extreme heat and cold, ultraviolet and infrared radiation, and fog and rain.

And this is well and truly stained glass. It respects the fundamental artistic characteristics descended from tradition (with which the workshop is familiar as it is experienced in this field), with classical glass, colouring in the glass and black joints contributing to the composition. But "Silovitrail" extends these possibilities. In contrast to the technique using lead, it is here possible to cut out very large areas, to assemble them edge to edge and to join them with a light-coloured filling.

This innovation has already been honoured by a monumental creation, the "Porte du Vent," a 25 square metre stained glass window, with 657 pieces of glass and 62 colours, based on a cartoon Marc d'Hamonville. It is on permanent display in the great staircase of the secondary school (CES) in Grenade-sur Garonne. This is not the first time that the South-West of France, a land of tradition (particularly from the gastronomic point of view) and a field of modernity (aeronautics, space, electronics, composites, etc...), illustrates the words Louis Pasteur addressed to the students at the Ecole des Beaux Arts (School of Fine Arts) on March 6, 1865: "There are circumstances



A stained glass window from Atelier du Vitrail d'Art

in which I clearly see the possible and desirable alliance of Science and Art, when chemists and physicists can take their places among you and enlighten you." And it is indeed in this dynamic region of the South-West that the use of computers applied to

mosaics has already opened up the future to this other form of ancestral art.

And it is surely not the last time. The "Second Forum of Arts of the Scientific and Technical World" (FAUST), with its international attendance, its festival of scientific films, its 28 conferences, lectures and discussions, its 12 concerts and 6 exhibitions, was recently held in Toulouse, to present "everything that can make up an interface, between the world of research and technology, on the one hand, and the world of creation and cultural life, on the other."

This revival of the stained-glass window has to be appreciated for its true worth. Its rôle in the development of architecture and decorative art has been fundamental in the West, and particularly in France, which alone owns more old stained glass than the rest of the world. As a precaution against bombing in the Second World War, five hectares of stained glass, from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, were deposited here.

And the modern stained glass window already reached new heights with the 1960s style and profited from contemporary trends such as Cubism, Expressionism and Abstraction and the best painters are still interested in it — L'Actualité en France.

Jacques Baudeneau

Language debate alive and kicking

By Michela Wrong
Reuters

PARIS — For many people the words "French dictation" evoke dreary images of school desks and ink-stained fingers.

But for the 177 finalists who filed nervously into Paris's Chailot Palace the words were tinged with glamour, holding prospects of the prestige France bestows on anyone awarded the rarefied title "champion d'orthographe."

The candidates were mostly professional people determined to prove their love of the French language by taking one of the hardest dictations around.

"The competition attracts an absolutely extraordinary following," says Franc Dumont, its organiser and press spokesman.

"It shows a love of French which can make us pretty optimistic for the future of the French language," he said, acknowledging that few nationalities showed the same narcissistic fascination for their own tongue.

With the bicentennial of the 1789 French Revolution fast approaching, this is a time for unashamed patriotism — which may help explain the growing popularity of competitions like the spelling championship.

The competition has been running for the last three years, with the number of participants and countries steadily increasing.

This year 150,000 people entered the competition, fighting to win a coveted place at the televised finals in Paris last month, where the lucky few struggled with a dry text full of abstruse vocabulary and unexpected conjugations.

Dedicated amateurs

The competition is divided into four categories, according to age, nationality and whether or not participants have a professional involvement in the French language or are merely dedicated amateurs. This year's amateur winner was Michel Toromanoff, a retired engineer from Gentilly, south of Paris.

Although entrants from 13 countries took part, the tournament is as French as the baguette and is the Gallic equivalent in intellectual terms of crossword puzzle

in Britain.

In France, interest in the national language is a proud tradition stretching across age, class and social barriers. The main battle is between those pushing for modernisation and an establishment fighting tooth and nail against change.

On the official front, the ministry of Francophone affairs is committed to preserving the international prominence of the French language.

On the left bank of the Seine, 40 elected intellectuals who make up the Academie Francaise labour at a snail's pace on the latest edition of a dictionary aimed at defining what is and is not acceptable in French.

The Academie works hand in hand with the general commission for the French language, affiliated to Prime Minister Michel Rocard's office, in the losing fight against Anglo-American contamination represented by words such as "le walkman" and "le high-tech."

Meanwhile, filmmaker Claude Berri, whose works "Jean de Florette" and "L'ours" have scored well in French cinemas, has stirred up a hornets' nest by saying there is no longer any future in making films in French.

Language equals barrier

The language barrier prevented the films from enjoying world-wide distribution, he said. Berri's views sparked an outraged reaction from the conservative daily Le Figaro, which published an open letter from Francophone affairs minister Alain Decaux accusing the filmmaker of biting the hand that had fed him.

"How sorry I am, sir, that my admiration for you must from now on be tinged with pain," concluded the offended minister.

French teachers have also turned rebellious. A schoolteacher's union which carried out a survey of its members' views recently revealed that a huge majority believed French's quirky spelling and grammatical irregularities were an artificial obstacle to understanding and should be simplified.

However, it doesn't look as though the establishment is listening.

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Tiny South Pacific islands may vanish in future

By Francis Daniel
Reuter

SYDNEY — Tiny Pacific and Indian Ocean islands could vanish as the earth warms up and polar icecaps melt.

Cyclones, storms and floods will batter Australia's coasts. Severe dry spells will transform some of its vast agricultural lands into dustbowls.

Australia and the surrounding region will bear the brunt of the catastrophic climatic changes known as the greenhouse effect, scientists predicted at simultaneous conferences in 10 cities across Australia.

The greenhouse effect is caused by the release of large amounts of carbon dioxide and other gases into the air, mainly from the burning of fossil fuel such as coal and oil, and other industrial activity.

Heavy carbon dioxide concentrations form an upper-atmospheric layer that traps heat, raising the earth's temperature.

The problem is compounded by industrial chemical erosion of the ozone layer, which provides a protective shield around the earth, filtering harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun.

American scientist Stephen Schneider forecast climatic changes in the next century more dramatic than those during the last ice age.

Schneider, of the U.S. National Centre for Atmospheric Research, said temperature increases ranging from 3.5 to 4.5 degrees Celsius would change tidal patterns and raise sea levels by between 0.2 and 1.4 metres.

"A global increase of more than two degrees Celsius above the present is unprecedented in the era of human civilisation," he said.

"The main concern is that the rate of change will be so fast that natural and social systems will be unable to adapt," he added.

The average temperature during the last ice age — 18,000 years ago — was only five degrees Celsius colder than now.

In a joint research paper, Australian scientists Peter Roy and

John Connell said low-lying island states like the Maldives in the Indian Ocean and Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands and Tokelau in the Pacific would be submerged if the expected rise in the sea level of one metre occurred by 2030.

Other tiny island nations would be eroded and reduced in size, forcing millions of people to seek refuge elsewhere, they said.

The 2030 scenario presented to the conference saw Australians who live in coastal regions washed out of their homes and all major cities hit by severe floods, storms and unpredictable rain-falls.

Australia pleaded to the U.N. General Assembly last month for urgent global action against the greenhouse effect.

But scientists said international action was still a long way off. Some nations, like the Soviet Union with its large ice-covered wasteland, might find the warming of the atmosphere beneficial.

China, with its vast coal resources, would find it difficult to accept restrictions on the use of fossil fuel needed for its modernisation programme, they said.

A U.S. government report released last month says strategies to reverse the greenhouse effect are not yet available and calls on policymakers to consider ways to adapt to warmer world.

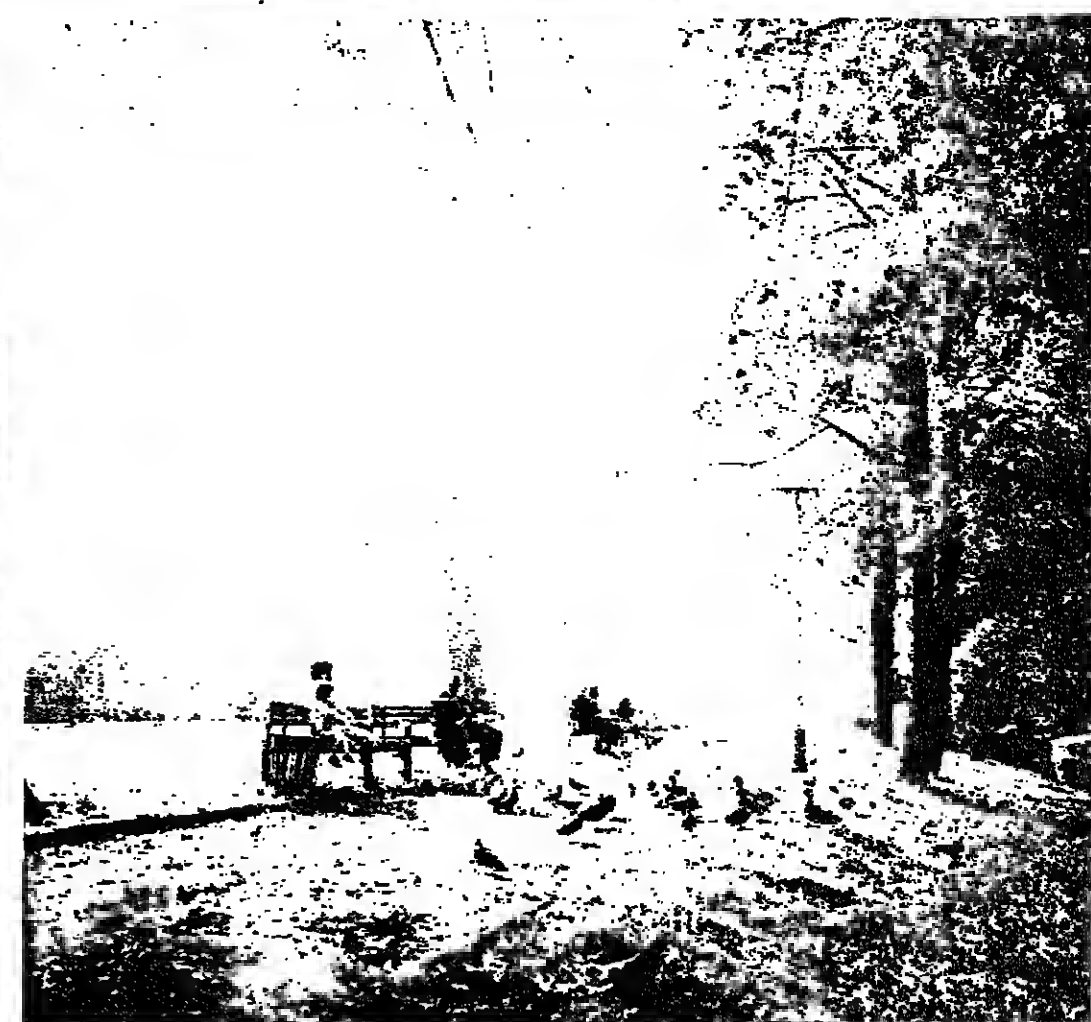
"Global climate change will have significant implications for when, where and how we farm for the availability of water to drink and water to run our factories for how we live in our cities for the wetlands that spawn our fish for the beaches we use for recreation and for all levels of government and industry," the report said.

Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze told the U.N. General Assembly in October that ideological divisions were receding "in the face of the threat of environmental catastrophe."

He warned of "a second front fast approaching and gaining an urgency equal to that of the nuclear and space threat."



Parks for the young and the old may be the future of Britain, rather than shipyards



City reflects a greening Britain after the age of heavy industry

By Marcus Eliason
The Associated Press

SUNDERLAND — The view from the Wearmouth bridge is a melancholy one. The last shipyard is closing, and the river wear, once smothered in coal dust and bustling with boats, lies silent, waiting for landscapers to turn its banks into parkland.

The other side of this eerie, elegiac metaphor for a greening, post-industrial Britain lies just up the road, where a sprawling new shopping centre has replaced the clang of hammers on steel with the chirp of busy cash registers.

Britain, once the workshop of the world, is being transformed into a nation of shopkeepers, tourist guides, bankers and hi-tech entrepreneurs, and nowhere is this more evident than in northeast England.

Seventy years ago, at the height of empire, British yards built one-third of the world's tonnage, and gruff, grimy, noisy Sunderland was the centre of shipbuilding.

But like most Western ship industries, Britain's has shrunk with the onset of Far East competition. Of 1,528 ships launched worldwide last year, just 31 were

British. Now, with the government's announcement Dec. 8 that it is closing North East Shipbuilders Ltd., Sunderland's 600-year-old shipbuilding industry has reached its end.

The 2,400 jobs lost will hump Sunderland's male unemployment above the 20-per cent mark after a steady fall in the past two years from 28.6 per cent to 19.1 per cent.

"I never imagined this could happen. I thought there'd always be a yard here," said Ernie Hunter, 56, a short, broad-shouldered man who went to work as a ship's plumber at the age of 14.

But all over the northeast, in former citadels of heavy industry like Newcastle, Sheffield and Sunderland, new life is sprouting amid the rubble of the smokestack industries.

Coal, steel, shipbuilding and textiles are being supplanted by computer manufacturing, Japanese auto plants, retailing, tourism — a northern counterbalance to the financial markets of London that have blossomed under the free-market doctrines of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

New lives

One example is the Metropole, which claims to be Europe's largest combined shopping and leisure complex with 4.8 kilometres of shopping malls and an indoor amusement park.

But the future of the new Britain depends on whether men in their 40's, who have spent their lives in overall welding, hammering, plumbing and riveting, can find new lives as shopkeepers, computer programmers and hotel keepers.

North East Shipbuilders' compensation package includes \$80 million to redevelop the docks and teach workers new skills.

"It's closure on the cheap, a bloody insult to a skilled workforce," said Alan Milburn, a researcher who is heading a campaign to save the shipyards.

Many of the men are hoping the campaign will succeed, and of

a dozen interviewed at random during the dying days of North East Shipbuilders, none appeared to have given any thought to acquiring a new skill.

Brian Brown, a welder, wondered sardonically whether Sunderland needed 2,400 extra shopkeepers. Another welder, Kenoy Downes, noted the failure rate for new businesses is more than 50 per cent.

Men like Brown stand to receive about \$33,000 on average in severance pay. His mortgage is paid off, his children almost grown, but that does not make life on the dole more attractive for a vigorous 49-year-old man who was born and bred in Sunderland and wants to stay here.

The unions insist NESL's modern facilities can still turn a profit. The point to studies predicting a global upturn in shipbuilding in

the 1990's.

Bye to the shipyard

"To write the United Kingdom as a maritime trading island nation out of the world shipbuilding market is industrially, economically and strategically crazy," said Milburn.

Most British shipyards were nationalised by Harold Wilson's Labour government in 1977, and since Thatcher's Conservatives came to office in 1979, they have been steadily winding down the industry. With NESL's demise, the state will no longer own any shipyards.

Milburn accuses the government of being so ideologically obsessed with winding down heavy industry that it deliberately resisted outside offers to buy the yards.

But Industry Minister Tony Newton told parliament none of these offers "constituted a viable future."

Sunderland, a city of 200,000 was never a garden spot. A 19th-century travellers' handbook described it as "enshrouded in the blackest gloom of smoke."

Shipbuilding, recorded in Sunderland as far back as 1346, was its lifeblood. Its ships kept Britain in touch with its empire and even afterward, in the 1970s, it produced the sturdy and highly popular SD14 cargo ship, the mainstay of modern shipping, more than 150 of which were launched.

Today, its municipal museum illustrates in the recorded commentary accompanying a slide show of Sunderland's history.

"Sunderland is a town with a great past," it says. "Now we're looking for a new kind of future."

Whistles and protest greet innovation at La Scala

By Daniel Liefgreen
Reuter

MILAN — Innovation is a risky business at Milan's La Scala, the world's most famous opera house and a bastion of conservative tradition.

Just ask Italian director Luca Ronconi, who walked into a chorus of whistles when he came out to take a bow following last Wednesday's 1988-89 season opening — Rossini's "William Tell".

Ronconi's production of Rossini's last opera features a backdrop of huge screen panels periodically flickering images of snow-capped Swiss mountains, gushing rivers and lush green forests, filmed by award-winning photographer Giuseppe Rotunno.

Mixing cinema and opera triggered controversy and enraged protest from some opera fans. There were shouts of "What happened to Rossini?" from the gallery at the end of the opening night, highlight of the Milan social year.

"I don't think it corresponds to the concept of opera," said Italian Senate President Giovanni Spadolini, who attended the premier. "It's very scenic but I don't know how much it suits Rossini."

One young woman seated in the upper tier of La Scala's gallery, or loggione, the noisy nest of opera traditionalists known as loggionisti, yelled at Ronconi: "You destroyed Rossini."

Jonathan David Scully, a timpani player in the La Scala orchestra for 10 years, said he had never before seen such jeering of a director on the opening night.

"There was an incredible amount of noise," he told Reuters. "He (Ronconi) got some applause, but it was very polite."

Used to it

Ronconi took the protests calmly.

"I am used to it," the director told Milan's Corriere Della Sera newspaper. "I did my job. Everybody has the right to applaud or whistle."

"There are a lot of traditionalists in the theatre, I don't accuse

them of not understanding... but using cinema doesn't seem to me so revolutionary."

To be fair, the loggionisti can be unmerciful on opening night. They also turned their wrath on American soprano Cheryl Studer, who arrived in Milan only four days before the premier as a last-minute substitute for ailing Lella Cuberli.

Studer said it was the first time she has been whistled. "It's the last time I substitute someone on opening night," she said.

Apart from the controversial screens, reviews have been highly favourable for popular conductor Riccardo Muti and Chris Merritt, the American tenor in the role of Arnold.

Indeed, the whistling had died down at the second performance on Saturday. But comments from the audience during the intervals showed little support for Ronconi's screens.

"They don't add anything to the opera. I found them very distracting," said one opera-goer.

Asked his opinion of the cinema background, Musician Scully measured his words carefully: "I'm in the pit so I don't see everything. I've only seen some of the projections at rehearsals. 'The whole thing seems a bit like a travelogue. I never thought it was a great idea.'"

But Muti and others strongly defend Ronconi's production. "Some people would have preferred the typical backdrop — Swiss chalets and cows... Ronconi and (scenic director Gianni) Quaranta have opened a path that should be followed without blind imitation," Muti said.

"La Scala has a duty to look ahead, to attempt new things, to not become rusty through routine," he added.

Not everyone agrees with a futuristic approach, however.

Outside La Scala's entrance last weekend, opera fan Giuseppe Fuoco gathered signatures to support a campaign for a law reinstituting Giuseppe Verdi's suggested diapason, or the range of notes sounded by a voice or instrument.

Fuoco says great opera voices are being destroyed by the increasingly rising pitch of orchestras.

Don't boil away vitamins

ALTHOUGH the part that vitamins play in keeping us healthy is now common knowledge, both their existence and role were only discovered early this century.

Before then, all that was known was that certain elements in our diet were important to our wellbeing. Thus it was found that the juice of limes prevented scurvy; this disease, caused by a lack of vitamin C, was common among sailors deprived of fresh fruit and vegetables during long voyages.

Most vitamins must be obtained from specific foods, as the human body builds up very few itself. A well-balanced diet should provide us with all we need.

However, much of the vitamin content in the foods we eat is destroyed long before it reaches our digestive systems. This is particularly true of vitamin C, the most vulnerable of all the vitamins.

Vitamin C is vital for healing wounds and mending broken bones. It also increases the body's ability to absorb iron, one of the most important minerals in nutrition.

The absorption of iron in the body is complex and varies greatly from food to food. Eggs, for example, contain much iron, but in this form it is not well absorbed by the body, and in turn, eggs tend to hinder any iron absorption from other foods.

Avocados are an excellent source of iron. Contrary to popular belief, spinach is not a good source. The iron content in lettuce, though considerably less than spinach, is much more readily absorbed.

Much of the vitamin C content is lost in the preparation and cooking of vegetables. Unfortunately, immediately fruit and vegetables are cut or shredded, some of the vitamin is lost by their exposure to the air.

Cooking increases this loss, but if vegetables are cooked in as

little water and as quickly as possible, more vitamin C will be retained.

The water should be boiling before the vegetables are added, and whenever possible vegetables should be steamed. It is better to cook potatoes unpeeled as their vitamin C content is located just under the skin.

Vitamin B is the umbrella name for several vitamins necessary to the central nervous system. Lack of them can cause depression, fatigue and irritability.

The B-complex vitamins are important in our diet as they disperse the energy we receive from the proteins, carbohydrates and fats that we eat. Too much of one can cause a deficiency in another, and a deficiency in one can make the others more or less useless.

The B-complex is present in meat, bread, cereals, milk, green vegetables and peanuts. As with vitamin C, most B vitamins are lost by excessive cooking. Riboflavin (Vitamin B₂) is sensitive to light and therefore milk, one of the main sources, should not be left in the sun or indeed light for any length of time.

Vitamin D is usually present in the same foods as vitamin A, such as milk, butter and eggs.

Vitamin A is also found in vegetables like spinach and carrots in the form of carotene, although in this guise, it cannot be released into the digestive system without oil. Therefore it is better to eat a carrot salad with an oil and vinegar dressing, or hot, buttered carrots rather than the vegetable on its own.

Vitamin E is present in most foods, especially lettuce, egg yolk, wheat germ, milk, butter, brown rice, sweet corn, nuts and liver. Sunflower and sesame oil are especially rich in this vitamin, and being poly-unsaturated, are also invaluable to those on fat-free diets. It is difficult to be deficient in this vitamin — Lion features.

Children for sale

By Criselda Yabes
Reuter

PHILIPPINES — Nightclub dancer Vivian Bernales bartered her baby for rent money after she was abandoned by her American sailor boyfriend when she was four months pregnant.

After her lover left on sea duty never to return Bernales quit her job and later accepted an offer from a couple to pay her rent in exchange for her child. She gave birth secretly and the couple signed papers saying they were the baby's parents.

Bernales, 26, is one of dozens of bargains and prostitutes working around the giant U.S. Subic base who have given up their children, whose fathers are American servicemen, for a price.

"Babies are more in demand if they have the skin of an American," she said.

Selling mixed-race children, called Amerasians, has become a business in Olongapo west of Manila and no one is sure just how many babies are traded. The nearby Subic base is one of two major military installations in the Philippines that are home to 22,000 American servicemen and 25,000 dependents.

Rather than go through the red

tape of legally adopting Amerasian children, couples find it easier to deal directly, though illegally, with the mothers.

The buyers are usually wealthy Filipinos but include American servicemen married to Filipinas. A West German woman arrested in Manila in June for heading a syndicate that sold Filipino babies in Europe was deported in December.

Poor, hopeless

Like Bernales, most of the mothers settle for payment of their hospital bills and a little cash to tide them over before they go back to work. Most, like Bernales, hope they can keep their next American boyfriend.

Bernales's friend, Pernby, sold her blond, blue-eyed boy for \$350.

Natty Sarapi, administrative officer of the U.S. Pearl Buck Foundation, said prostitutes had approached her for help to sell their babies but she turned them down.

The foundation helps more than 1,000 abandoned Amerasian children around Olongapo receive education and medical care.

Sarapi said mothers often pleaded that they were too poor to give their children a less hope-

less future than their own. "But you can't sell babies like they were pigs," Sarapi told the mothers.

There have been cases of prostitutes leaving their babies at hospitals without paying the bills. A local official said some hospital employees take the abandoned babies for secret adoption, or sell them.

"I have heard of that, but we don't investigate them," said Dr. Teresita Orin of the Olongapo General Hospital. "The hospital is a business entity. As long as there is someone who takes care of the baby or pays the bills, the hospital does not involve itself."

The department of social works, which officially arranges adoption, said about 30 Amerasian children were legally adopted this year and more couples are awaiting the department's approval.

Government sources say social workers handling adoption papers are suspected of favouring couples who pay up to \$5,000 to speed up paper work.

Searching for dad

Some abandoned Amerasian children are cared for by church and private groups providing them homes and education. Many grow up searching for their

fathers in hopes of seeing the United States.

Marvin Gene Alan, 17, one of the lucky few who made it to college, dreams of becoming a sailor in the U.S. navy, like his father, whom he has seen only in photographs. His stepmother, who died last June, told him his father sailed for Texas even before he was born.

"I don't know of anyone who does not want to go to America," he said. "I can always get a job there picking apples."

Genna Smasal's father left when she was still an infant. She said her American grandmother objected to a wedding because "she thought Filipinos lived in cages."

Smasal, aged 22, has heard stories about her father having come back looking for her and her mother.

"I want to see him, even just once," she said. She wrote to a U.S. government records office for help.

Olongapo Mayor Richard Gordon said some unwed mothers abandoned by their American lovers are having second thoughts about selling their children.

"Some of them are smart," he said, "they know their babies might turn out beautiful and become movie stars."



Amerasian youngsters

Shekel devaluation draws fire

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Labour Party leader Shimon Peres was under attack Wednesday for devaluing Israel's shekel just five days after taking up his new job as finance minister.

Peres devalued the shekel by about five per cent against the dollar Tuesday. The Bank of Israel (central bank) said the move was needed to check speculative purchases of foreign currency.

But bankers and economists said there should have been other measures including wage restraint and budget cuts along with a devaluation. Newspapers said Peres did not consult finance ministry officials.

"The devaluation of the shekel has turned an economic problem into a crisis. With one nervous blow, the economy has been thrown back into the chaotic days of uncertainty and speculation," said Jerusalem Post economics editor Shlomo Maoz.

"By disregarding the advice of professionals at the Treasury and preferring to pay attention to those with vested interests, Shimon Peres has committed a serious blunder," he said.

"The price of his first economic lesson in his new post will be a first by the public and later by Peres himself," Maoz added.

A rush for foreign currency has been driven by speculation that the shekel would be devalued by as much as 15 per cent next month when Peres brings in an economic recovery package.

Banks said buying of foreign currency continued Wednesday with purchases by midday of \$60 to \$100 million.

Bank of Israel Governor Michael Bruno had praised Peres

to make Tuesday's devaluation, which set a representative rate of the shekel at 1.8 to the dollar, as the speculative buying of foreign currency threatened to deplete foreign reserves.

Israel is suffering from its most serious economic slowdown for three years, with industrial output down three per cent, partly because of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Peres was foreign minister in a previous unity government but took on finance in the new coalition to help bring Labour-affiliated industries and Kibbutz collective settlements.

It is Israel's largest industrial system, the Labour-affiliated Iron Industries, the devaluation added \$40 million to a nearly dollar-denominated debt.

The economics minister, Yitzhak Rabin, said he will fight any attempt to cut his budget, already strained by the extra cost of fighting the Palestinian uprising.

He said Wednesday: "From my experience, I can almost tell you what's going to happen. For the next couple of days there won't be heavy demand (for foreign currency) because nobody imagines there can be one devaluation after another. But in a few days, it will start again and again reach a climax and again there will be a necessity for a devaluation."

Aides said that in his forthcoming economic package, Peres wants to cut one billion shekels (\$600 million) from a 1988/89 budget worth 7.8 billion (\$28.5 billion).

His plans include taking 200 million shekels (\$120 million) in defence cuts. But Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin says he will fight any attempt to cut his budget, already strained by the extra cost of fighting the Palestinian uprising.

Bahrain boosts defence spending

BAHRAIN (R) — Bahrain is boosting military spending this year by 10 million dinars (\$26.5 million), despite the ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war.

An official publication said Wednesday the government was allocating 66.5 million dinars (\$176.4 million) for defence in calendar 1988, about 14 per cent of the total budget.

The revised military budget compares with the 56.5 million dinars (\$150 million) Bahrain had planned to spend in the year.

Defence spending totalled 51.5 million dinars (\$137 million) in 1987.

Western military experts in the region said the move reflected a determination by Gulf Arab states to continue to bolster their

defences in case a fragile ceasefire agreed between Baghdad and Tehran last August broke down.

"All six states in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) want to become self-sufficient militarily," said one.

"Now that the war has ended, it would be tempting to spend on other things but they are determined to strengthen their defences as quickly as they can afford it," he added.

The GCC states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — generally pointed Iraq in the eight-year conflict in which Iran frequently attacked shipping serving Baghdad's Arab allies.

The English translation of the weekly official gazette said the new 1988 allocation would be met from reserves.

Western diplomats said the move was probably not intended for any new military projects, but would speed up payments on arms which had already been bought.

The money could go to projects including a \$60 million military defence being built on the south of the island or a \$400 million arms package concluded earlier this year with the United States, they said.

Delivery of 12 advanced F-16 fighters was included in the package, due in the second half of 1989 while the arms package, designed by the U.S. army, is scheduled for completion during the year.

Bahrain wanted to buy Stinger missiles from the United States during 1987, but the deal was blocked by Congress amid fears the weapons could be used against Israel.

The island eventually leased the surface-to-missiles and launchers from the Americans for 18 months.

Diplomats said it was unclear how much money Bahrain was contributing from its own pocket to the U.S. arms package.

They say the official figures, though accurate in terms of the budget, seldom reflect the country's actual military spending levels because a major share is donated by its GCC neighbours.

U.S.-EC hormone ban now escalates

BRUSSELS (R) — The European Community (EC) said Wednesday that a U.S. decision to impose trade sanctions in retaliation for an EC ban on imports of U.S. hormone-treated meat was totally unjustified and broke world trade rules.

Willy De Clercq, EC commissioner for trade and external relations, said in a statement that he profoundly regretted the U.S. decision to impose sanctions from Jan. 1.

"The U.S. measures are totally unjustified and against international conventions, namely GATT rules," he said, referring to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the body which regulates world trade.

The U.S. sanctions affect \$100 million worth of EC goods. Total trade between the two giant partners last year amounted to \$166 billion.

The EC ban on hormone-treated meat was imposed in response to consumer pressure, and was lifted in 1987 until the end of this month — an attempt to allow time for negotiations with the United States.

Washington argues that there is no health risk to humans from eating hormone-treated U.S. meat since U.S. farmers use only safe products. It says the EC's objections amount to a high-walled trade barrier.

Efforts to find a solution before the deadline have failed, and the EC ban will shut out some \$100 million worth of U.S. trade from Jan. 1.

"Every country, and the Community as such, has a duty to protect the health of its consumers and to apply them in a non-discriminatory manner," De Clercq said.

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ECONOMIC NEWS BRIEFS

AMF lends \$254m to 3 Arab states

ABU DHABI (OPECNA) — The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) has extended \$254 million in loans to Algeria, Iraq and Syria. Algeria will receive \$113 million to offset the deficit in its balance of payments, bringing the fund's total lending to the country to \$188 million. The credit carries an annual interest rate of between 3.75 and 4.75 per cent and is repayable in three years. Iraq is to receive \$112 million, bringing total credits made by the fund to the country to \$524 million. Earlier, the fund extended \$29 million to Syria bringing its total lending to the country to \$77.50 million. The loan carries an annual interest rate ranging between 5.2 and 6.4 per cent and is repayable in 10 years. Since its inception in 1977, the Abu Dhabi-based fund's total lending to Arab states has reached \$1.49 billion.

French firm wins big Iraqi contract

PARIS (R) — French state-owned steel group Usinor Sautier said it had won a contract worth \$120 million to supply steel tubes for a projected Iraqi oil pipeline linking Baghdad with the Kirkuk region. A spokeswoman said Usinor subsidiary GTS Industrie won the contract to deliver 140,000 tonnes of steel tubes. Details of how the contract would be financed were not immediately available.

Kuwait plans joint venture in plastics

KUWAIT (OPECNA) — The Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) of Kuwait is planning to enter plastics by producing polypropylene after having successfully produced chemical fertilisers. A company source said that PIC and Union Carbide would sign a licensing and basic engineering agreement by the middle of February 1989. Polypropylene is used by industries making toys, car bumpers and furniture. The plant will be set up in the Shuaiba industrial area and will have a yearly capacity of 80,000 tonnes. It will come onstream in early 1992. The establishment of the plant in Kuwait, the source stated, would revive the national plastics industry.

Oman, Iran sign trade agreement

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Oman signed a trade accord with Iran and agreed to set up a joint cooperation commission to boost economic links, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) has reported. IRNA said the first meeting of the joint commission will be held in Muscat in March, with subsequent sessions alternating between Tehran and the Omani capital. The commission will review commercial issues as well as economic and industrial cooperation. The Iranians are seeking aid for their massive post-war reconstruction programme. Oman, whose oil deposits are modest compared to its Arab neighbours like Saudi Arabia, is driving to diversify its economy. IRNA said a team of Omani experts will visit Tehran in the next few weeks to investigate Iran's industrial possibilities. An Iranian delegation was scheduled to go to Oman before April next year. The Iranians will also stage an industrial exhibition displaying export products in Muscat, the agency added.

EC to lend Ethiopia \$11.5 million

BRUSSELS (R) — Ethiopia is to receive \$11.5 million in aid from the European Community's development bank, to help finance construction of a new port terminal at Assab. The port extension is part of a transport scheme costing over \$140 million to which the World Bank and African Development Bank are also contributing. The EC said in a statement. The terminal, which will be able to handle general cargo, container and roll-on/roll-off ships, will be built between the middle of next year and 1992. The 17-year loan for 15 million European Currency Units (\$11.6 million) carries an interest rate of three per cent. The EC said it is being provided under the Lomé Convention, a trade and aid pact between the European Community and 66 countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Cuba expects 1.5-2.5% growth in '89

HAVANA (R) — Cuba's economy will grow between 1.5 and 2.5 per cent in 1989, the head of the Central Planning Board (Juceplan) was quoted as saying. He said growth of the global social product (GSP), the communist equivalent of GNP, would result from a bigger sugar crop and higher output of other farm products, improvements in the oil and nickel industries and better results in the fields of electronics, medical equipment and construction materials. Exports other than sugar are expected to increase 17 per cent. The target for 1989 compared with growth of 2.5 per cent reached in 1988, according to a figure provided by President Fidel Castro earlier this month. That result did not offset losses in 1987 when the economy shrank 3.2 per cent after

expanding an average 7.2 per cent during the 1981-85 period. During the national assembly's meeting, Castro said Cuba's major economic problem was an acute shortage of foreign currency. Castro stressed the need for investments in areas such as tourism to help generate or save hard currency.

Uzbeks throw out Kremlin budget

MOSCOW (R) — In an unprecedented move the parliament of Soviet Uzbekistan has rejected a draft government budget and has pushed through important changes, according to the official Soviet news agency TASS. TASS hailed it as a further sign of political change in the country and described it as "without precedent." The Uzbek Supreme Soviet, like other elected bodies in the Soviet Union, has for decades acted as a rubber stamp for Communist Party and government decisions. Deputies threw out the 1989 budget on the grounds that industry and agriculture targets set by ministers were too low. TASS said it did not say when the session took place. Targets were increased and tens of millions of roubles earmarked for industry were channelled into social, ecological and housing programmes after the budget was discussed with ministry representatives, TASS said. Reforms under way as part of Kremlin leader Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika (restructuring) programme are intended to turn parliaments into working institutions, from the Supreme Soviet downwards.

Algeria reports new oil strike

ALGIERS (R) — The Algerian state petroleum agency Sonatrach has struck oil in an area close to the Tunisia border, the agency has said. The find is located near Negrine in Khenchela province, 400 kilometres south-east of Algiers, at depths of more than 3,000 metres, an official statement has said. The statement said light, sulphur-free oil with a good proportion of gas had been found and long-term tests were currently under way.

Japanese spend \$34b on wining, dining

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese companies spent a record 4.19 trillion yen (\$33.8 billion) last year on entertainment and gifts, according to the National Tax Administration Agency. The agency said spending by hospital and the life insurance industry was highest at 967 million yen (\$77,680) per firm. The 4.19 trillion yen total for entertainment spending represented an average daily expenditure of 11.4 billion yen (\$91,94 million) — a 6.1 per cent increase over 1988. Wining and dining clients cost companies a total 3.95 trillion yen (\$31.8 billion), the agency said. Japanese executives are often given carte blanche to entertain at exclusive nightclubs and Japanese-style inns, where an evening meal can cost \$500 or more. Inviting clients for rounds of golf and exchanging gifts are other customary entertainment expenses. The agency said Japanese firms spent an additional 355.9 billion yen (\$2.87 billion) on donations to political organisations in 1987, a 16.2 per cent increase over the previous year.

Turkey continues hiking petrol prices

ANKARA (R) — Turkey raised consumer prices for petrol and petroleum products by up to 20 per cent Wednesday, the seventh increase this year. The new prices are effective immediately, the energy and mineral resources ministry announced. The cost of top grade petrol rose 20 per cent to 270 lira (44 cents) a litre from 225 lira (36 cents). Normal grade was raised to 250 lira (41 cents) from 210 lira (33 cents). Diesel oil and kerosene prices rose to 570 lira (91 cents) from 480 lira (77 cents) per litre. The highest increase, 20 per cent, was for cooking gas, up to 6,000 lira (\$3.31) from 5,000 lira (\$2.76) for a 12 kilogramme bottle. Ministry sources said super and normal grade petrol prices had risen by 111.6 and 109.5 per cent respectively since the end of last year. Prime Minister Turgut Ozal has announced big increases in other state-run goods and services during the past year to reduce Turkey's ballooning budget deficit and inflation.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Wednesday Dec. 28, 1988 Central Bank official rates			
	Buy	Sell	
U.S. dollar	277.4	279.0	380.5
British sterling	61.2	62.5	380.5
Deutsche mark	267.1	268.3	236.5
Swiss franc	316.2	318.1	127.6
French franc	55.2	56.6	128.2

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midday on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.

	One Sterling	One U.S. dollar	U.S. dollar
	1.787787	1.950185	Canadian dollar
	1.787787	1.789598	Deutsche mark
	2.020010	1.511225	Dutch guilders
	37.5250	6.110020	Swiss francs
	131.1317	125.5570	Belgian francs
	6.162670	6.920102	French francs
	6.920102	6.920102	Italian lire
	414.504150		Japanese yen
			Swedish crowns
			Norwegian crowns
			Danish crowns
			U.S. dollars

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

SYDNEY — A sprinkle of local institutional buying, particularly in major bank stocks, boosted share prices. The All Ordinaries edged up 2.9 to 1487.0.

TOKYO — The Tokyo stock market, riding a wave of optimism for the new year, rallied to end 1988 at a record high close. The Nikkei gained 108.07 to reach 30,159.00.

HONG KONG — Year-end window-dressing pushed stocks sharply higher in the first day of trading after the Christmas break. The Hang Seng rose 39.85 to 2,696.44.

SINGAPORE — Prices rose over a broad front, extending recent gains in moderate trade. Sentiment was underpinned by another record rise in Tokyo. The Straits Times industrial index gained 6.24 points to close at 1,042.77.

BOMBAY — Market holiday.

FRANKFURT — Year-end profit-taking sparked by Tuesday's climb in New York weighed on West German shares, driving prices lower. Volume remained extremely limited. The real time 30-share DAX index edged at 1,333.74, 0.5 per cent lower.

ZURICH — Prices held steady on the year's penultimate trading session but many sectors finished mixed due to thin turnover. The All Share Swiss index rose 6.5 points to 937.6 as a stronger dollar and Tokyo's record close affected sentiment.

PARIS — Share prices were easy but steady on their openings in quiet trading at midsession as operators took profits. The 50-share price indicator was down 0.18 per cent at 1200 GMT, unchanged from the opening.

LONDON — Prices hovered near the day's highs in thin late trading, reflecting Wall Street's performance after early slim gains. By 1545 GMT the FTSE 100 index was 11.6 up at 1,785.6.

NEW YORK — Wall Street stocks showed little overall change but blue chips and chemicals were firm. An analyst said the market reacted to spot news such as a higher quantum price

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The contractors who had been Qualified previously by the Seventh Education Project and willing to participate in the following bid are requested to get bid documents from the projects and buildings Directorate, Ministry of Education from 24/12/1988 with the following conditions:

- The Seventh Education Project is partially financed by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- Description of Tender
- Price JD
- Tender bond JD

- Tender No. 49/D/88
Construction of school building Kuthuba and Al-Karak Area (7740) sq.m.
- Tender No. 50/D/88
Construction of school buildings in Al-Shalleh and Alernal Area (8030) sq.m.
- Tender No. 51/D/88
Construction of school buildings in Almazra and Rouam Area (5740) sq.m.

- Last date for purchasing copies of Tender documents is 31/1/1989.
- Last date for submitting financial offers is 7/2/1989 at 12:00 noon at the Ministry of Education.

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Roh orders crackdown on violent protests

S. Korea accepts talks with North

SEOUL (AP) — South Korea sent a message to communist North Korea Wednesday agreeing to high-level political and military talks aimed at reducing tension on the divided peninsula.

Prime Minister Kang Young-Hoon suggested in the letter to North Korean counterpart Yon Hyung Muk that they head delegations to alternating talks in Seoul and Pyongyang to discuss non-interference, cooperation in select areas and building "mutual trust" in military matters.

"To wipe out mutual distrust and restore trust between them the two Koreas should recognise each other's ideologies and systems, conduct dialogue on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference and develop cooperative relations on the principle of mutual unity until unification is achieved," Kang wrote in the letter delivered to the North at the border truce site of Panmunjom.

The response did not appear to fully meet a Nov. 16 North Korean proposal for wide-ranging talks on reduction of military forces. The South did not refer to troop reduction, and its proposal was more vague.

Kang made no reference to the North's proposal that talks also negotiate withdrawal of the U.S. forces based in the South under a mutual defence pact. The United States has 42,000 troops in the South.

South Korea's letter also prop-

osed separate economic and Red Cross talks to discuss cooperation in humanitarian and economic areas. It suggested preliminary talks in early February to set the terms for full negotiations.

The South called for prime ministers to head the delegations, instead of deputy premiers as proposed by the North. Procedural differences have been a major problem in arranging bilateral talks in the past.

Delegations of lawmakers are to resume talks Thursday at Panmunjom on clearing the way for full-scale parliamentary talks on a non-aggression pact and other measures. South Korean legislators expect full talks to be held sometime next year.

Wednesday's letter was in response to a separate North Korean proposal for inter-governmental talks. Past talks between the two Koreas on reducing tension failed to make progress.

The two Koreas have hundreds of thousands of troops facing each other along the 240-kilometre border, which is sealed. There are no communications except for a hot line.

U.S. and Soviet forces divided the Korean peninsula when they ended the Japanese occupation at the end of World War II in 1945.

The North invaded the South in 1950 to start the Korean war, but was driven back.

Clashes, protests

South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo ordered a crackdown on political and labour unrest Wednesday and warned that violent protests were threatening South Korea's political and economic stability.

Roh, in an unusually harsh statement, issued a "special directive" to police and security forces to halt violent protests and labour strikes, attacks on government buildings and other political violence.

"Unlawful and disorderly developments and excessive demands gushing forth in the course of liquidating authoritarianism... are threatening not only democracy but also the stability of the free economy," Roh told a meeting of key government officials.

Opposition and dissident groups immediately denounced Roh's statement and charged the government was seeking excuses to oppress opponents and avoid any loss of government authority. The national assembly is controlled by the opposition.

Top opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung said Roh's directive was "a plot schemed by fascists not to lose their invested rights."

The government and opposition officials made the texts of Roh's and Kim's comments available to news organisations.



Rajiv Gandhi

India, Pakistan discuss nuclear pact

ISLAMABAD (R) — Pakistan and India, which have fought three wars, may soon sign an agreement not to attack each other's nuclear installations, officials of the two countries said Wednesday.

They said it was not certain whether the accord, which would be a major development in long tense relations, could be completed in time for signing at scheduled meetings this week between Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan and Rajiv Gandhi of India.

"In principle, yes we are ready to sign. The question is when to sign," a senior Indian official told Reuters.

"The point is that every draft needs to be referred to the respective governments before an agreement is signed. It is being talked about now between the two countries and subject to those consultations, we will sign it," the official said.

"We are hoping it will be signed this week," a Pakistani official said.

Gandhi, due in Islamabad Thursday, will be making the first working visit to Pakistan by an Indian prime minister since his grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru went in 1960.

Gandhi's visit for a summit of South Asian leaders is a sign of the beginnings of a major change in relations with Pakistan which have long been shrouded in suspicion, Pakistan's nuclear programme high among them.

India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 but has not done it again and insists its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.

44 suspected Sinhalese extremists found murdered

COLOMBO (Agencies) — Authorities have found the charred bodies of 44 suspected anti-government militants this week in southern Sri Lanka, a senior police officer said Wednesday.

The police officer, who asked not to be identified, said in an interview that the victims had been shot to death and then burned.

A government communique blamed the murders on the People's Revolutionary Red Army, which claims Sinhalese radicals are responsible for the escalating ethnic violence on this tropical Indian Ocean island.

The charred bodies were found along roads in southern Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese heartland, the officer said.

At least 19 bodies were found Monday and Tuesday near Tissamaharama, about 175 kilometres south of Colombo, the officer said. Other bodies were discovered in nearby towns of Dickwella, Middeniya, Tangalle, Weeraketiya and Lunagamveera, he added.

An extremist Sinhalese group, the People's Liberation Front, oppose the government's efforts to end the five-year-old insurgency by militant Tamils demanding a separate homeland in the north and east provinces. More than 8,500 people have died in the fighting.

Sinhalese extremists contend the accord grants too many concessions and have vowed to kill anyone who supports the agreement.

They have been blamed for more than 900 murders since the accord was signed 17 months ago. Most of the victims have been supporters of the governing United National Party or security personnel.

The People's Revolutionary Red Army surfaced about a month before the Dec. 19 presidential election and started hunting front members.

Authorities have said they believe the group is comprised of members of paramilitary units, a leftist political organisation and a Tamil rebel group.

Ex-minister faces probe

Meanwhile, the government said Wednesday it was setting up a commission to investigate allegations former Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel had received unlawful payments from two British companies.

In a statement it said the commission would also probe companies in which De Mel or members of his family had any financial interests.

Government sources said the allegations had come from members of the public but declined to identify them.

De Mel resigned last January after being finance minister for 10 years and later defected to the opposition Sri Lankan Freedom Party.

Security Minister Lalith Athulathudali told reporters last week De Mel left the country after Freedom Party candidate Sirimao Bandaranaike lost the Dec. 19 presidential election.

The poll was won by Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa of the ruling United National Party.

Athulathudali said De Mel left the country hours after the result was announced, using a diplomatic passport he failed to surrender when he resigned as finance minister.

Government sources said the commission would probe allegations De Mel had received unlawful payments from a British company involved in building a dam in Sri Lanka and another connected with a currency printing plant.

They said it would also investigate if De Mel had received other payments from foreign banks wishing to open offices or to continue doing business in Sri Lanka.



Italian industrialist is kidnapped

BRINDISI (AP) — A 64-year-old industrialist was kidnapped outside his home in southern Italy's Apulia region early Wednesday, authorities said. Marzio Perrini, head of a company that manufactures and markets wood products, was grabbed as he was getting into his car to drive to work near his port city in the beel of the boot-shaped Italian peninsula. Perrini's wife said she saw a car driving off at high speed. She rushed outside and found one of her husband's shoes and his broken eyeglasses lying next to his car. It was the 17th reported kidnapping in Italy this year. In the previous cases, five of the victims remain in kidnappers' hands.

Reagan visits new offices

LOS ANGELES (R) — President Reagan, preparing for his coming retirement, paid a visit Tuesday to his new offices here in a building that was the setting for a recent Hollywood film. Reagan spent 45 minutes at the offices he will occupy after he leaves the White House Jan. 20, inspecting the decor and unpacking boxes of books. The offices are located on the 34th floor of the Fox Plaza office tower on the Avenue of the stars here.

Rhinos killed by lightning

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Two rhinoceroses who had been courting each other at a municipal game reserve were killed by lightning as they slept under a tree, according to a newspaper report. J.C. Richards, town engineer of Krugersdorp, was quoted by the Star newspaper Wednesday as saying the cow and bull had been constant companions in recent weeks and had mated Dec. 2. The rhinos' charred carcasses were found Sunday at the Krugersdorp game reserve, northwest of Johannesburg, and were buried Monday.

Hal Ashby dies at 59

LOS ANGELES (R) — Hal Ashby, who directed such critically acclaimed films as "Coming Home," "Bound for Glory" and "Shampoo," died of cancer Tuesday at the age of 59, a family spokesman said. Ashby, who died at his home in the Los Angeles film star colony of Malibu, won a 1967 film oscar for editing the 1967 film "In the heat of the night," starring Rod Steiger and Sidney Poitier, and was nominated for an oscar for directing the anti-Vietnam war film "Coming Home." Considered one of the most wide-ranging directors in Hollywood, Ashby saw his film "Harold and Maude," about the love affair of a 19-year-old youth and an 80-year-old woman, played by Ruth Gordon, become a cult classic. He chronicled the successful tour of the United States by the Rolling Stones in 1981 in the film "Let's spend the night together." Known for giving precise instructions to actors, Ashby also directed "Shampoo," which told of the affairs of an amorous hairdresser, played by Warren Beatty. The film "Bound for Glory" was a biography of another singer, Woody Guthrie, played by David Carradine.

Siamese twins grow up, more out

LONG BEACH (AP) — Last year, Yvonne and Yvette McCarthy caused a stir by going to college. This year, they are moving out of their mother's home and grabbing the spotlight again. The women are Siamese twins, joined at the top of the head. "I'm 39, and I always said I was going to move into my own place by the time I was 40," said Yvette. "I mean, when you get to be in your late 30s, you just decide — it's time to get your own place." Yvonne agreed. "I only wish I'd gotten around to it before — I love it, being on my own," she said. The twins are craniopagus twins, the rarest kind of Siamese birth. Though joined at the skull, they have separate brains and personalities but share a common bloodstream. Their mother, Willie McCarthy of Compton, taught her daughters to think of themselves as separate beings. So it was natural they would someday move out on their own. Their new home is a tiny apartment with one bedroom which rents for \$510 a month, paid for with close budgeting of government checks.

Philippine army set for all-out drive against Communists

MANILA (R) — Defence Minister Fidel Ramos says the military plans an all-out offensive against Communist rebels in the Philippines in 1989.

The objective is to break the back of the insurgency by the end of President Corazon Aquino's term in 1992.

He told Philippine reporters at a year-end press conference Tuesday that the armed forces had laid the groundwork in 1988 for the coming all-out push against the guerrillas, which the military hopes will cripple the insurgency.

"For the first time in a long period we have stemmed and

reversed the tide of the Communist insurgency," Ramos declared. He said the 160,000-strong Philippine armed forces were now "ready to launch an all-out offensive against the Communist rebels in 1989."

The Daily Globe newspaper, published by Aquino's speechwriter Teodoro Locsin, said in a front-page report Wednesday that the guerrillas planned to counter with attacks on U.S. military bases and multinational companies in the Philippines if Washington stepped up help for the armed forces.

There was no immediate comment on the report from the

government.

Ramos dismissed a statement by the banned Communist Party of the Philippines that it could take power in 10 years as "whistling in the dark."

Ramos said for the first time the military had reversed the upward trend in rebel strength, with the size of guerrilla forces dropping to an estimated 23,060 regulars at the end of the year from an all-time high of 25,800 last June.

Continued military successes would keep the Communist New People's Army "further and further away from their goals" of seizing power, he said.

Recent problems place aging jetliners under scrutiny

WASHINGTON (AP) — A number of recent structural failures involving aging aircraft is prompting officials to re-examine the question: When is an airplane too old to fly?

The effect of aging aircraft on safety gained widespread attention eight months ago when a third of the roof of a 19-year-old Aloha Airlines Boeing 737 tore away during flight, sweeping a light attendant to her death.

Industry experts from Boeing engineers and airline maintenance officials to government regulators and aviation crash investigators were stunned that such a large section — 6 metres long along the top of the plane — would peel away.

The issue surfaced again in the investigation of the crash of Pan Am Flight 103 last week in Scot-

land. A massive structural failure on the vintage Boeing 747 — the 15th off the assembly line in 1970 — has not yet been ruled out.

On Monday, a 36-centimetre hole tore open along the crown of a 20-year-old Boeing 727 belonging to Eastern Airlines, forcing the plane to make an emergency landing.

The aviation industry and government regulators have acknowledged for years that the airlines' jet fleet is growing older and that added precautions are needed to monitor cracks and other problems that develop on these jets.

In the case of the Pan Am Jumbo jet, Pan Am spokesman Jeffrey Krienderer emphasised that the Boeing 747, although 18 years old, had undergone extensive modifications and strengthening as recently as mid-1987.

But Pan Am and many other airlines indeed are flying older aircraft than once had been expected. Eastern not long ago, for example, decided to overhaul its older Boeing 727s, instead of replace them.

Since 1979, the average age of the aircraft fleet belonging to the major airlines has increased from 10.28 years to 12.53 years, according to Avmark Inc., an aircraft consulting and appraisal company. It is estimated that there are about 2,300 jetliners in service that were built before 1968.

Ben Cosgrove, vice president for engineering at the Boeing Commercial Airplane Co., emphasised in a recent interview that age in itself is not necessarily unsafe. But he said as an aircraft

gets older it must come under closer inspections and increased maintenance.

As a plane ages "you should start to expect to see some damage occur... through fatigue and corrosion," he says.

In 1983, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and Industry began a programme aimed at developing new safeguards to keep aging jetliners airworthy. Under the programme about 1,000 older jets — Boeing 727s, 737s, 747s, McDonnell Douglas DC-8s and DC-9s — are subject to special inspections because such jets are more likely to develop cracks and other problems.

But critics question whether closer monitoring and more frequent inspections are an adequate safeguard.

"In some cases modification (of the aircraft) is needed, not just (added) inspection," said Cosgrove, acknowledging that this view represents a change in industry thinking.

In October, the FAA directed the replacement of 7,200 rivets on every older Boeing 737 to guard against a repeat of the Aloha accident. A string of previous FAA orders following the Aloha incident focused only on requiring closer inspections.

The far-reaching and costly October directive is seen by industry experts to reflect a new attitude that close inspections are not enough to keep older aircraft safe and that in many cases sections of planes must be routinely replaced even if no defect is apparent.

Ecologist's murder highlights land reform problems



Brazilian ecologist Francisco Mendes, his two children and wife

Landowner's son confesses to killing

SAO PAULO (R) — A rancher's son has turned himself in to police and confessed to arranging the murder of Brazilian ecologist Francisco Mendes, according to police.

A police spokesman said by telephone from the Acre state capital of Rio Branco that Darci Alves Pereira, 21, had surrendered to police there Monday.

The killing stirred outrage both within Brazil and abroad. Mendes, a 44-year-old rubber tappers' leader, had an international reputation as a campaigner struggling to preserve

the Amazon rainforests. Thousands of murders in the lawless Amazon region go unsolved, but the government said that it was determined to catch the killers of Mendes.

In Amazonia powerful land owners hold political sway and human rights groups say killings carried out by gunmen in the pay of the rich are seldom investigated. Environmentalists, churchmen and left-wing parties argued that the government bore responsibility for the death of Mendes, who had told the authorities that his life was in danger. He was shot dead at his home in the Amazonian town of Xapuri Dec. 22.

Harmed reputation

The Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper said in a report from Washington Tuesday that the killing of the ecologist had harmed Brazil's reputation abroad more than any other event in 1988.

Pereira is the son of cattle rancher Darci Alves da Silva. Police, environmentalists and the national press had said that Darci and his brother Alvarino Alves da Silva were the main suspects.

Mendes himself said in an interview with the Rio newspaper Jornal do Brasil Dec. 9 that the two wanted him dead.

Armed conflicts over land in Brazil are endemic and tensions are rising. Both landowners on the one hand and landless peasants and rubber tappers on the other have become more organised in recent years.

Land reform

Landowners are grouped in the powerful Rural Democratic Union (UDR), widely accused by the Brazilian left of responsibility for many of the killings in the countryside. "Death to the UDR" read one of the banners displayed Sunday at Mendes' funeral.

The UDR emerged strengthened from municipal elections last month. Many of the which it supported were elected to be mayors of towns in rural areas.

The Jornal do Brasil newspaper, in a prominent front-page report, said Monday the Roman Catholic bishop of the Acre state capital Rio Branco had also received a death threat.

It said Bishop Moacir Grechi received a telephone call the day after Mendes' murder from a man who advised him to take care because he would not see 1989.